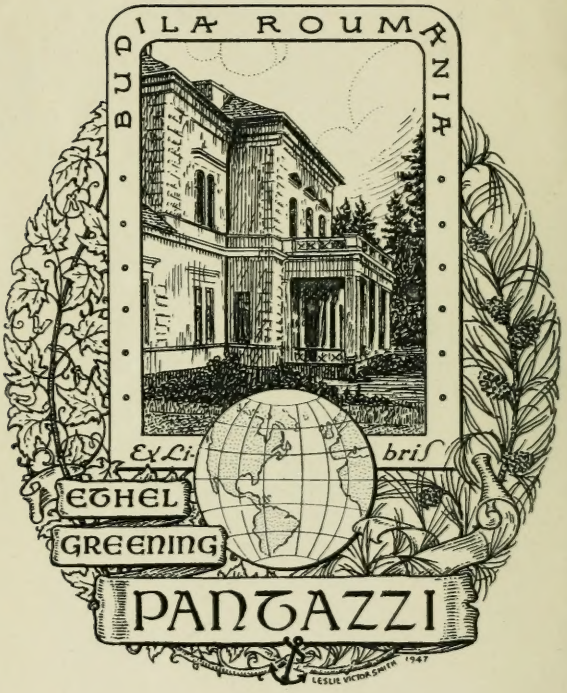
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THE LUCKY MILL

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BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ROUMANIAN BY
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FOREWORD

With the advent of national independence, Roumanian literature began to attain an originality which distinguishes it among Europe's other literatures. This is primarily due to the renaissance of everything Roumanian during the last twenty-five years. The writers freed themselves from the tradition, which had taught them to imitate foreign authors; and they began now to seek inspiration in the fertile and rich soil of their own country. It is only too natural that poetry should find its stimulus in the folklore, and prose in the fairy-mystical tale of the people.

The greatest part of modern Roumanian literature deals with the stupendous problem that confronts Roumania to-day: the struggle between old and new Roumania, between its oriental and its occidental elements. Carried further, this is the conflict between sound patriarchalism and the bravado-culture of the overmodernized city-dweller.

It is evident that writers handicapped by such

circumstances will present their situation with a gloomy, weird consciousness. Their writings necessarily must appear to be pessimistic—but in fact they are of the most intense optimism, of that optimism which evokes the desirable by portraying the detestable. This is characteristic of the pioneers of Roumanian literature, of the poet Mihail Eminescu, and the novelists Barbu Delavrancea, J. L. Caragiale and Alexandru Vlahutza.

But genuine perception was soon to be transformed into absurd counterfeiting. Without its original force and creative quality, a pessimistic philosophy for such a young nation would have been disastrous. Besides, without a pilot, Roumanian literature threatened to degenerate into a receptacle for vagrant débris from most all European literary 'isms. It was at this moment that Ioan Slavici seized the wheel.

A native of Transylvania, Ioan Slavici is of that Roumanian stock which has most stubbornly kept to its Roman origin. On the other hand, being cut off by the Carpathians from a close intercourse with the Balkans, Transylvania has been forced least to yield its national characteristics to the Greek-Slav influence which constitutes the oriental element in the people of the kingdom of Roumania. Also their contact with the Germanic peoples

has displaced the Greek Catholic religion by the Roman Catholic and Protestant.

The Roumanians of Transylvania are more genuinely sensitive, their horizon wider, and their natures more plastic to foreign influences. The Transylvanian element is surely the richest and most fertile. Here the people are more primitive in their feelings and their ideals. It is the life of this peasantry that Slavici introduces in Roumanian literature, that is sweeping like a new breeze over the literature of a people infected with the germs of an ill-digested philosophy.

It is the life of the peasant who, as Slavici himself pictures, "is patient and complying, doffs his hat even before a synagogue, kisses the hand of the Roman Catholic as well as of the Greek Catholic priest, stands with his head bent before a passing funeral procession. He forgives the fallen woman and lights a candle also for the peace of the man who died on the gallows, but he never forgives him who forgets his nation and estranges himself from his people and family and country."

Ioan Slavici himself belongs to this peasantry. Born in 1848, he studied at the Universities of Budapest and Vienna and, returning to his native land, played a significant rôle in the political life of his Roumania "irredenta." Sentenced to

prison by the Austrian authorities for his Roumanian propaganda, he fled to the Kingdom, where he accepted a professorship at the University of Bucharest. Later he returned to his native village.

Ioan Slavici is not an intellectual aristocrat. When he observes his fellow-men he does not ascend the tribune of indifference to be a dispassionate onlooker on the strife that is carried on below. He is not a poet of nature. He is made of the stuff of which poets of humanity are made. With him, the ultimate happiness of mankind is paramount—to be sure, not a cinematographic happiness, not a happiness that is in being, but that is to come through the spiritual education of the people.

It might be thought that Ioan Slavici portrays chiefly types. But what constitutes the greatest riddle for him is the human soul—the human soul and its consciousness, the strokes that it must suffer from the hand of fate and its absurdities, the irrevocable superiority of the predestined order of things over the will of man. To unveil this riddle, to lay it bare to human perception, this is the task that Ioan Slavici has chosen. A task aeons-old, indomitable as life itself!

A. Mircea Emperle.

New York, 1919.

THE LUCKY MILL

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I

"By rights, a man ought to be satisfied with what he has; for, since we talk about it, not riches make one happy, but peace and quiet in one's home. But you just go ahead and do as you think right, and may God be always with you and bless you with his loving care. I have grown old; and all my life long I have hit only on joyful things; I don't understand why you young people won't be satisfied with your lot. I am afraid I would lose the happiness that I have enjoyed till now, were I to go, now in my old days, to look with you for a new home. But you know what is right; do what you've decided, you mustn't mind me and my sayings. Naturally it will be hard for me to leave the hut in which I have lived all my life and where I raised my children, but, at the same time, I shiver at the thought of staying here all alone; maybe, this is the real reason why I think of Anna as too young, too well-bred

and too inexperienced for a hostess, and when I picture my pretty Anicutza in that station, I am overpowered even now by a desire to laugh. . . ."

"Then, in a word," replied Ghitza, "we remain here! Now as always I will patch the boots of the peasants, who, all week round, run in their *opinchi* * or bare-feet, and on Sundays, if the weather is wet, take their boots under their arm and carry them to church, so they will not be used up too soon; and now as before, we will sit before the house, when the sun is shining, and I will look at Anna, she at me, we both at the child, and you, mother-in-law, at all three of us. Thus will 'peace and quiet in one's home' be maintained in all its joy. . . ."

"I didn't mean it that way," answered the mother-in-law. "I only wanted to tell you what I thought of your plan, you know, just my personal thoughts. . . . But do just as your will bids you, and you know there can hardly be a thought of my staying here or going anywhere else if you move to the mill. If you decide, I'll come with you, and even very gladly, with the love of the mother who is to accompany her child into the

* An especial kind of sandals worn by the Roumanian peasant.

great world, on her first road towards happiness. But don't ask me to speak the decisive word!"

"Then I will speak it!" Ghitza exclaimed cheerfully, "and not to lose any time, I'm going right now to the landlord, and from St. George's on, the inn 'at the Lucky Mill' is ours."

"May it be in a good hour," the old woman said, "and may God give us at all hours his beneficial counsel!"

II

AWAY from Ineu, the country road runs through shadowy woods and over barren land, while on the left and right lie villages half hidden among ravines. For an hour or so the road is smooth and easy, but then it enters upon a steep rise which one has to climb with great difficulty. Once on the ridge and the plain again in sight, one has to make a halt. The horses and the draught-cattle have to be watered and allowed a short rest, for it is quite some labor to get over the steep hill, and there, behind the valley, there is more hilly, shaggy ground.

In this vale lies the "Lucky Mill."

Approaching from no matter what side, the traveller rejoices when from the top of the hill he can discern the mill in the vale; for if he came from the pathless regions back there, he knows that the hardest exertions are over; and again, if he set out from the town, from Ineu, he is aware of the possibility of finding at the mill a

companion, or at least of waiting there for one, so he will not have to be alone on the journey through the unhospitable country.

Thus one traveller after another rested at the Lucky Mill, and gradually a sort of a homestead started up around it; imperceptibly the mill ceased to grind and became a tavern for all who came by it. Those who had been taken by surprise by the night-fall could find there also a bed of straw. Finally the landlord had a real tavern built, a few hundred yards away from the rivulet, at a better situated place; now the mill remained all forsaken, and with its broken wheels and perforated shingle-roof through which the wind roared, it had a grim aspect. Five crosses were set up in a line before the mill, two of stone and the others oaken, and everyone of them neatly decorated with pictures of the Madonna and the child; they were to remind each one who passed the spot that he stood on consecrated ground, for where a cross has been erected a human life has experienced a great joy or has happily escaped a danger.

The place seemed to be even more hallowed since the new host with his young wife and old mother-in-law had moved to it; the traveller was no more received as a stranger who had come

God only knew whence, but as a good friend whom one had expected for a long while. Hardly a few months after St. George's, wanderers who were familiar with the neighborhood would say no more that they were going to stop at the Lucky Mill, but at Ghitza's, and the people of the vicinity knew who and where Ghitza was. There in the plain, between the steep hill and the unfavorable grounds, was for them no more the "Lucky Mill" but "Ghitza's Inn."

For Ghitza the new inn was quite a "Lucky Mill."

Four days in the week, from Tuesday evening until Saturday, the inn was full of people; one came, one went; one heavily loaded, the other with a full purse; all stopped at Ghitza's inn, asked for something and paid honestly for what they had got.

On Saturdays, towards evening, it quieted down, the wanderers had gone their ways; then Ghitza seated himself by his Anicutza, the old woman joined them and the children (there were already two), and before them he counted the money that had come in during the week. The mother looked then at the four and at the happiness that lay on their features, and a delightful

feeling came over her at the sight of her children, of her toilsome son-in-law, of the happy daughter and the lively grandchildren; contentedly they enjoyed the bliss they had truly earned.

On Sunday mornings Ghitza harnessed the dappled horse to the small carriage and took his mother to church; for her husband—may God bless him!—had been a churchman and the all-honored singer of the parish; whenever she sat in church she imagined she saw him and heard his splendid voice.

Before the old woman went to church everything had to be in good order, even to the smallest detail; under no circumstances would she have gone otherwise. On Saturday afternoon the stable had to be cleaned and the yard and square before the inn swept. Meanwhile, Anna and the old woman arranged things in the house for the coming day. On Sunday mornings the mother supplied the children with fresh underwear, arranged her toilette, and, after having thrown another look in the house and the yard to be sure that everything was in perfect order, she mounted into the carriage.

Before leaving, Anna and Ghitza kissed her hand, she would once again embrace the children

and say, crossing herself and at the same time signalling the driver to start his horse: "May God give us his good counsel!"

Because her children could not accompany her to church but had to remain at the inn, she always departed with a heavy heart.

Sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right, the country road continued to the top of the hill, and down in the valley one could see nothing but faded grass and heather; only near the stone hedge by the rivulet, were a few elders crowding one another.

The nearer one came to the hills the narrower became the ravine, and more animated the environs; the rows of willow-plow lay adjacent to the rivulet and ended in a compact underwood that closed the vale. At the left, along the mountain ridge, oak forests loomed into view, and at the right other half-stripped woods, dried stumps and roots phantastically grown out of the ground. On the top of one of these hills stood a half-burned tree on whose withered, charred branches ravens and jackdaws alit with hoarse shrieks; the ravine became gradually darker and only after some time could one perceive the tin-wrapped tower of the Church of Fundureni, veiled by mountain masses that crowded in one another

and were overtopped by the Bihor; upon its isolated peak the morning sun broke and scattered down the valley. . . .

Alone with his Anna, Ghitza contemplated the landscape, its beauty enrapturing him, and his heart throbbed louder when the usually so quiet and rational Anna threw herself suddenly into his arms and fondled him after the manner of a child. She was young and fresh, like the rose in the morning dew, and when he clasped the slender figure and lifted her up to him she would nestle to his breast like a dove. . . .

Only now and then, at night, when the wind roared and the mill shrieked in its joints, he felt less at ease, and the place seemed to be haunted and run wild. He would grope then in the dark for Anna, who usually slept with a child at her side, to make sure that the cover had not slipped away.

III

As many ravines as there are in the mountains, they are full of swine-droves; necessarily there must also be a great many swine-herds for their surveillance. And among these swine-herds one can find people of all stations: common herdsmen, more pretentious ones, and chieftains.

One flock is not usually very numerous, so that where a few thousand swine have been driven together, there are hundreds of droves; every drove has a herdsman who is assisted by one or more boys, and when the herd is larger, even by more.

In these ravines live a race of swine-herds, who first see the light of the world in the woods amidst swine, whose parents, grandparents and ancestors had been swine-herds, who have their own customs and rites and who talk among themselves a language that they alone understand.

And as there is not one single business in the world that could be safe from loss, and since the

swine-herds are on the average poor devils, they must have some one who will make good such losses as may be suffered by the herds under them. He is the "Szamadau" (meaning the accounter), as he is called in their language—a swine-herd like the others, but one who is rich, so that he can compensate for every swine that has been stolen or lost. Usually, the Szamadau distinguishes himself from the others not only by his being well-to-do, but also by his pitilessly rigid character; he is nearly all the time on travel, always on horseback, riding from one drove to the other. He is at home in all localities, the people in the neighborhoods he knows well, the good and the bad, especially the bad ones whom the whole world fears, and even in the cabbage dish he can tell the ear of the swine that has been stolen from one of his droves!

And if one wanted to be certain about what was true in the talk of safety round the mill, it were indeed simplest to ask a Szamadau; one would be sure to learn the motives of this talk and even to learn all the names of the rascals. But, above all, the Szamadau is reticent, and whenever one asks him about such things, he answers: "I know nothing—I have nothing—I have so and so many herds and for these I am responsible. I

cannot afford to be at odds with anyone. . . ." He never tells anyone what he knows, and only when forced he makes use of it, and even then only if it serves him. . . .

Now and then swine-herds would stop, too, at Ghitza's inn—big, husky figures whose black hair, shining with grease, reached down their naked necks to their soiled, dirty-grey shirts. In spite of their dilapidated appearance, however, they behaved properly and when leaving paid quite honestly. . . .

One Monday a little light carriage, delicately supported by an iron axle and driven by two beautiful horses, stopped before the inn. It was undoubtedly odd that the inside of the carriage was entirely empty, there was no stool and not even hay in it. The three travellers seemed to be swine-herds. One of them held the reins in his fat hand and the other two sat on the green-painted rim of the carriage board. From all these facts one would naturally conclude that all of them were coming from the immediate neighborhood.

"They don't strike me as having something pleasant on their minds," murmured Ghitza, after he saw them jump from the carriage and look in all directions, in the manner of people

who have returned to a place where things have undergone a visible change in their absence.

They asked whether the Szamadau had been there already, and, after learning that that was not the case, they had their horses unharnessed, fed and watered and led into the stable. Then they entered the inn, where each of them drank enough for three, and shortly afterwards departed with a "good luck!"

"But they haven't paid!" exclaimed the mother-in-law in surprise.

"That does not matter. I have arranged with them already," Ghitza answered, looking into the house for something that might occupy him so that nobody should be able to look into his face and he not have to give his wife a reason for turning pensive all of a sudden.

A short while later the Szamadau arrived also, the famous Szamadau, Lica.

Lica, a man of about thirty-six years, was slenderly built and not strong. His face was bony and fleshless; thick, contracted brows covered small, green, shimmering eyes, and a thin, long moustache completed the piercing features of his physiognomy. Lica was also a swine-herd, but he belonged to those who always wore a milk-white, finely woven shirt, who had thick silver

buttons on their coats and in their hand a carmoisin-red whip with engraved bone handle and adorned with golden dots.

He held his horse in front of the inn, looked with a piercing gaze first at Anna and then at the old woman, who were sitting near a large table under the wooden framework, threw another hazy look around him and asked for the host.

"We are the hosts," the old woman said, rising from her seat.

"That I can see for myself," Lica answered. "But there must be a man around here, too. I asked for the host and it is he I want to see."

He said this in a tone of voice in which he desired to intimate that he was in haste and did not intend to carry on a conversation; therefore the old woman departed at once in order to find Ghitza. Surprised as a child, Anna looked up to to the rider who stood before her, motionless, like a figure of marble.

Had Lica been an ordinary man he would not have gazed dispassionately into the emptiness before him, but would have taken delight in the sight of the beautiful woman who started back more and more from the manly defiance of his nature.

"Is the Hungarian dead?" Lica asked Ghitza when he saw him approach.

"Yes!"

"And you have taken his place here?"

"Yes!"

"Beginning with St. George's?"

"Yes!" Ghitza answered again curtly, darting a furtive glance at the women to see whether they had not been disquieted.

"It is my son-in-law, Ghitza," began the old woman, pointing to him. "And, thank God, since we have been here we have fared well. . . ."

Lica smiled and took one end of his moustache between his teeth.

"Here," he then said emphatically, "here everyone fares well, if he is sensible. All he needs is to be on good terms with the people, to wish them a 'good luck' when they come and go, and for the rest the one above cares. Didn't a few men pass before?"

"My God!" Ghitza answered evasively. "We are here in the middle of the country road and quite a lot of people pass. . . ."

"I speak accurately—three men?"

"Three or four or ten," answered Ghitza, endeavoring to give the conversation a humorous touch. "This I can't tell any more. They come

and go, passing all the time, and I cannot remember who all the people are, and even if I cared, I would find no time for it. Eventually one gets accustomed to the continual noise and one ceases looking people in the face. Perhaps there is even one among them who would rather not have everyone know whence he comes and where he goes. One never ought to ask a host such things, for he hears and sees so many things, that he must forget them so that he may not hurt his patrons."

"Right!" Lica answered. "I asked you merely because I would very much have liked to know. It's about my people whom I sent before me to examine a wood we would like to lease for our swine the coming winter. Now I don't know whether they are ahead of me or I ahead of them."

"Most likely the former," answered Ghitza, somewhat firmer. "But I could not say for sure that they were among those whom I saw pass by to-day."

"Most assuredly!" exclaimed the old woman impatiently. "The three swine-herds who drank so much whiskey and paid nothing!"

It gave Ghitza a pain in the heart when he heard his mother-in-law speak so unwittingly, and even as much confidence as he showed her in all

his enterprises, he wished she had kept silent this time.

"Women have a sharper eye, neither are they so much taken up with the work in the inn and consequently can remember something like this easier than I could," Ghitza tried to excuse himself, forcing down his discontent with the old woman.

"If my people have not paid," answered Lica, chewing his moustache, "it was merely because they knew I would come around and pay for them."

With these words he jumped from his horse and signalled Ghitza to follow him into the inn so that he might pay the bill.

"After all, the old woman is wiser than I," Ghitza murmured, while following Lica.

"The old woman should have kept quiet!" Lica flared up when he was alone in the room with him. "Do you know who I am?" he then added briskly.

"No!" answered Ghitza, and he shivered at this question.

"But you probably know my name. I am Lica, the Szamadau Lica! There is much talk about me, much of which may be true and much invented. But one thing you can see with your own eyes: I

go across the road in the middle of the day and no one attacks me, no one puts a spoke in my wheel; I come around town and deal with gentle folk; therefore must I be responsible for twenty-three swine-droves. Do you understand? Not because I could pay for what may be stolen even in one year, but because everyone knows that nobody would dare steal even one single swine from my droves, because everyone knows that even he is doomed whom I may suspect of theft. Do you understand? Now, I want you to inform me precisely of whoever stopped here, who passed on the country road, what the one did, what the other said; but no one but me must know, no one! I hope we understand each other. . . ."

Ghitza would have had a great many things to answer, but he was so bewildered by what he had heard that when he recovered Lica had already set spurs to his horse.

"He seems to be quite a decent fellow," said the old woman, looking after him. "Who was it?"

"The Szamadau Lica," answered Ghitza shortly.

"Who? Lica?" cried Anna, terrified. "What people don't say about him!"

"Now, such is the world. One ought never to

believe anything until he sees it with his own eyes."

He himself knew not well whether he had spoken these words out of his bitterness or whether with the intention of hiding the anxieties that had risen in him from his wife.

"One cannot help shivering when looking into his face," Anna added.

"Now, this you simply imagine," Ghitza tried to quiet her. "He is after all merely a man who can have his bad days, and on such days cannot look exactly kissable."

"There are many people in God's world," began the innkeeper on the following day, looking alternately at his wife and at the old woman. "But no one resembles another. For instance, one is out to buy something, like Lica, the Szamadau, who wants to lease the woods. If he wants to transact a profitable business, he must be the only buyer; who knows, consequently, whether it would not anger him, whether it would not even cause him damage, were I to tell other people that he was around here. For if the owner sees that he is the only one desirous of offering him something for his woods, he will finally come to an agreement with him. But if another one also has

the intention of buying the woods, and I tell him that Lica had been around, he will surely do his best to gain a handicap on the forest and then Lica's intentions are harmed. . . . Isn't that right?"

"Quite right," acquiesced the old woman.

"Or, if there is someone around who would like to sell his woods and who therefore is after Lica trying to make him come to an understanding, and I tell him that Lica was around, so I serve him and Lica, perhaps, but I damage him to whom Lica went. But it is not my place either to cause damage or gain to people."

"We are not here, after all, to account to everyone who was here and who wasn't," interrupted the old woman.

"In fact, we know nothing and worry only about our own affairs," Ghitza added tersely but decidedly. . . .

From now on neither Ghitza nor his wife nor the old woman could remember who had been around when they were asked; and things in the inn went their usual course.

On the same day Ghitza had to drive to Arad on business. There he bought two pistols and hired a new servant, a robust Hungarian by the name of Marzy. A few days later he rode to

the nearby Fundureni, and brought with him two small shaggy dogs. He already had a dog, that's true, but he was useless, he had become lazy and so used to the throng of people that he barked no more even at the approach of strangers. The little dogs were tied right away to chains, and only when the yard was empty and the travellers had all departed were they let loose. Ghitza would then drive a few pigs into the yard and set the dogs untiringly on them. When the dogs had bitten them thoroughly, when they were even sucking the blood from the opened ear flaps, then his joy would reach its highest climax. He waited now impatiently for the days on which the inn would remain without visitors so that he might devote himself undisturbed to his new entertainment. Then he would occupy himself whole hours with the baiting of the dogs.

Anna, on the other hand, could hardly stand them, and her disgust for them grew into glowing anger, when the old woman added that it was good to have a dog in the house; one could sleep safer when one knew that one was guarded by a faithful dog. Just the fact that the old woman was right angered Anna, for she noticed that her husband had grown estranged from her and the children since he had brought the dogs into the house.

So far Ghitza had been quiet and settled as befitted the business man who takes the prosperity of his undertaking to heart, but now and then he would forget about his plans and projects and would join his wife whenever she would laugh her silvery laughter. But now he was as if completely changed, his former seriousness had turned into a hollow brooding, the slightest failure that he encountered could set him in a rage, a yelling, scornful laughter had taken the place of the former gentle laughter, and when as before he wanted to be playful with Anna he easily lost his composure and he pressed her so madly to him that she cried out loudly. How often did she want to question him as to the reason for this change! But in the end she always lost courage; for she feared he might be put into a passion and throw words at her that she had not heard from him until then.

Autumn was approaching slowly.

On a Thursday, as the place before the inn was full of carriages and a throng of drivers were sitting in the inn, a swine drove was being driven past the inn—all fat, large animals, beautiful, selected merchandise.

One of the herdsmen, a youth of about seven-

teen, entered the inn and asked for the innkeeper, Ghitza.

"God be with you! and the compliments of Lica, the Szamadau," he cried pertly when he beheld him. "He wants me to tell you to give us enough to eat and to drink, us and the swine-herds that follow us. In payment we are to leave you five swine behind, the largest and fattest of all; you may select them yourself. . . ."

"Lica pays well indeed," remarked one of the men at the tables.

"Well, he can afford to," added another one.

"Who knows," broke in a third. "He has a great number of droves under him, and if one considers what all these swine-herds require . . . well, and what such a fellow can stand for. . . ."

Ghitza grew gloomy, the tone of the swine-herd and the remarks of the drivers had deprived him of all composure. He could not refuse the swine if he wanted to remain on good terms with Lica, and on the other hand he could not consent in the presence of all these people.

"Never mind the swine," he said, therefore, after a while to the man. "I'll reckon up with Lica myself. You eat and drink as much as you please, as for the rest let it be my worry. . . ."

After the herdsman had left the room Ghitza

addressed the drivers. "How can I know what his people consume? I have an even account with him, that's all."

"That's right," approved the drivers.

"Ghitza, I can't understand you!" his mother-in-law addressed him after a while. "Why didn't you accept the swine?"

"But what do you want me to do with them?" he answered, irritated.

"Whatever you like! Sell them, slaughter them, fatten them! Ghitza, I tell you, take the swine, or otherwise your money is gone. Had Lica cash money, he would not be offering swine instead. You have to take from people what they want to give; for what they haven't they can't give you. . . . The man wants to pay honestly, why should you anger him for nothing? . . . He pays to-day, take it to-day; for you can't tell what will happen to-morrow. . . ."

"Well, there are other droves coming," Ghitza answered at last. "I'll think it over. Anyway, I have to know first what his people consume."

"May God give you his good counsel. . . ."

That was just what Ghitza wished for in this moment, but nevertheless he felt his heart becoming heavy while he thought of first one thing and then another.

One drove after the other was driven past, as soon as the one would come in sight, the other one departed; the number of those that had yet to come past became smaller and smaller and Ghitza's desire to retain the five swine promised to him grew steadily.

So, as the last flock was passing, he said to one of the herdsmen:

"Lica promised me five swine from one of his flocks!"

"I know nothing about it," answered the one whom Ghitza had addressed. "For," added another one jokingly, "we either pay in advance, or not at all."

Shortly after, Lica himself came around, asked for a glass of wine, inquired hastily about his men and galloped away on his horse, wishing the hosts a "good luck."

Ghitza looked long after him and it seemed to him that his mother-in-law was right, and that it was he who was to be the cheated one this time.

He was too sensible to let himself be mastered by his anger, for his relation to Lica appeared to him immediately in the right light.

If Lica opposed it no one could remain the host of the "Lucky Mill" for a long while, for besides the authorities and the landlord he had to be con-

sidered also; over all roads and vicinities he was absolute master, and it was useless to be on good terms with the authorities and the landlord and not to have closed his agreement also with Lica; if one wanted to stay at the mill, one had to become his creature, otherwise everything else would have been futile.

And Ghitza wanted to stay there, by all means he wanted to, for he fared well.

"Only three years," he uttered, "only three years and I am a made man and can start a business with ten helpers in town, and can leave this rotten business to others. . . ."

But all this depended on Lica.

If he lived on good terms with Lica he could fare quite well, for people like Lica spent their money freely. . . . The question was only what kind of services he demanded in return.

For the first time in his life his wife and children appeared a burden to him. Ah, were he free, what would he care what kind of services Lica would ask of him! He thought of the profit he could make in companionship with him, before his mind's eye he saw the colossal amounts of money and he had to close his eyes, dazzled by their glitter. He would gladly expose himself to any danger for one, for two years, if he

thereby could gain these sums. But this way! he had wife and children and had to be considerate towards them.

"We'll see"—he became reconciled at last, trying to give his thought another direction. "For the time being it is good that he is my debtor."

But only for a moment did he think so, for after a while, when counting his money to put it in the drawer, he reproached himself for his carelessness.

Ghitza was not the man to like to be in debt and therefore it was so much the more painful to him when he had to make loans to other people. He contented himself this time with the determination to torture the fellow so, until he received his money back.

He was feeling straitened in all his enterprises and was thence easily irritable. When he gave vent in the evening to his anger by being rude to the servant, and Anna had reproached him for his rudeness, he harshly called out to her:

"For God's sake, leave me alone, as if it were not for your sake only that I embitter my life. . . ."

Perplexed, she became silent and her eyes filled with tears; the words which she had to hear bore

very hard upon her, falling heavily against her heart.

"You must become grave right away over the most unimportant matters!" he said to her bitterly when he saw her weep.

He wanted to go over to her and beg her forgiveness, but he lacked the ability, something he could not account for kept him back. He felt his heart pained, his head full, and longing for quiet and solace, he hastened out into the open, without exchanging another word with her.

Had Anna known what passed in his soul whenever she saw him stare, lost in his thoughts, she would have tried to soothe him and, as much as it lay in her power, help him to bear his fate. But she could not find the courage to ask him and so brooded on the most varied suppositions.

On Sunday the old woman drove according to her custom to church, and the solemn atmosphere that lay all around, had on Ghitza a beneficial influence. It grew quieter around him and in him and gradually his old good-humor returned. He walked with Anna and the eldest son in the garden towards the alder-bush and pulled even Cula, the old, lazy dog, by his chain. For fun, he put his son on the dog's back to give him a ride. Anna became fearful lest the child might fall or

be hurt by the animal, but Ghitza would not listen to her and drove the dog at even a more rapid pace.

The two other dogs, that were running freely through the yard began to bark, and Cula, true to his instinct, began to bark as well and run after the other dogs.

Horrified, Anna cried out, for the boy sat straight on the dog's back and might fall at any moment; but Ghitza cared very little, if at all, as he held the dog sternly by his chain and looked in all directions.

But he could not discover anything suspicious.

"They must have scented a fox," he said, turning to Anna.

"Ghitza," Anna said to him sadly, "for some time I have not been able to understand you any more, you have changed completely, you see that I am speechless with fear when I see the child ride on the dog, and just in spite you——"

"God! I am an unlucky devil!" he retorted bitterly. "If once in a while I want to have any fun, whether good or bad—bum! my wife dislikes it. Come!" he added, lifting the boy and dealing the dog a blow.

"No, Ghitza! I don't like it!" exclaimed Anna, frightened, and ran after the dog. She was

pulling him by the chain and begged Ghitza urgently to set the boy on his back.

"Now, now, it was just a silly thing," he warded her off, moved by her love, and let himself slide onto the grass.

But Anna wouldn't let herself be interrupted, she put the boy herself on the dog and walked beside him, her arms twined around her darling. Now and then she looked back to see whether Ghitza was not laughing at the curious spectacle. But he did not smile, he was serious as before.

When he looked at his wife and child, he became more and more sad, he felt as if he had not seen them for a long while and that he would have to lose them again.

"Anna!" he finally said with a weak voice, "come, sit down near me. . . ."

She sat down. Long he looked at her drearily, stroking her hair and then asked:

"What do you think? Shall we not move somewhere else beginning with St. Dimitri?"

"Why?" She was surprised.

"Don't you find it boresome here?"

"I? No!"

"Doesn't a sense of fear oppress you here?"

"Fear of what?"

"Of what? Of all! Do you hear how grue-

some the bark of the dogs resounds: they have scented a trace, they found a dead bug or a rain-worm and so they bark, but I feel the marrow freeze in my bones when I hear them. . . . Anna, it is a terrible life the life we lead: we are alone, all alone in a wilderness, a most harmless thing, a nothing frightens us to death and we poison our existence with useless concerns. . . ."

"What is the matter with you?"

"What is the matter with me?" His answer was bitter. "A misfortune has fallen upon me, I lose the present for fear of the morrow; to-day I am with you and nothing unpleasant has occurred to me, but I think of the morrow and the fear of it won't let the joy of the present kindle its flame in me; perhaps my fear is groundless, perhaps the morrow will pass as quietly as to-day, but I lose it in the fear of the after morrow. And as long as we stay here this fear will never forsake me."

"Then we will go away. . . ."

"Yes, away, but can I make up my mind? As things are, it is hard for me. . . ."

"Then we stay here. . . . You know best what is to be done."

"Perhaps I know, Anna, but I cannot do it," he answered sadly. "At least not with my own will, I should have to be forced to it. It is hard

to talk with mother over it. I am ashamed, for she was from the beginning against our moving here, and you, Anna, you are a good-hearted, tender creature, but you have an easy heart and about world affairs you know little, *so* little. Instead of trying to chase the bad thoughts from me you let me become their victim, and when in my despair I know no more what to do with myself you look at me with your dear eyes and your good heart lives through the torments that I endure, but that is all it amounts to. . . ."

"How can I help it?" she answered, oppressed. "If God hasn't made me otherwise. . . ."

Ghitza answered no more, but gazed before him, lost in his thoughts.

After a while Anna raised her head and looked boldly in his eyes.

"But why don't you tell me all that hurts you, why do you keep all to yourself and gulp it down in you?" she asked, excited. "And then you reproach me that I do not help you, that I cannot find the right thing to soothe you. . . ."

IV

DURING this scene between husband and wife three riders approached slowly up the river, keeping close to the bank where they could advance unseen under cover of the willow-grove.

The dogs who had scented their approach at a few shots' range made for them with a violent barking.

"Damned bitches!" cried Lica, who was one of the riders, and stopped his horse. "As far as I can see the inn is empty, nor is anybody to be seen on the country road, but if we don't get these beasts silent, all is lost. . . ."

He dismounted quickly and walked slowly forward until he had come very near the dogs, and when they showed signs of throwing themselves on him, he threw himself on the grass and began to call them to him with all kinds of pet names.

The dogs started and stood still. The other riders joined Lica and acted in the same manner, so the dogs thought they had tired people before

them, who had stretched themselves out for a rest, far away from the yard they were supposed to guard; consequently they returned slowly to the inn, standing still and barking, now and then.

Then Lica raised himself and tried again to lure them to him, but as soon as he would approach them, they would begin to bark loudly.

This way he spent more than half an hour with the dogs that were used to suck the blood from the bitten ear flaps of swine; finally they had become so confiding that they let themselves be caressed by him.

"Splendid animals, these! but nevertheless I am their master!" he said and paced step by step with the dogs, stroking them, until he reached the tavern.

Ghitza had already forgotten that the dogs had been barking, when Lica arrived at the inn and woke Lae who slept on a bench under the wood-frame, sending him for his master.

"Were it not better I went myself for him?" asked one of Lica's companions.

"Just let him come out to us," answered Lica.

When Ghitza heard that Lica was there he jumped up quickly from the grass; for a minute he lost his colour, but he did not think much and went towards the inn.

Anna had observed her husband acutely, the change in his face had been so obvious that she felt uneasy herself. Therefore she approached him quickly when she saw that he wanted to depart.

"Ghitza!" she begged entreatingly. "Wait a moment! Send Lae away first. . . ."

She looked piercingly into his face.

"Don't you wish to understand me, now when I do commence to make you out?" she continued with a quelled voice. Then she went on as usual: "We agreed to send Lae before so that he wait there for us. Lae!"—she addressed the latter,—"go down the slope, behind and along the willow-grove, in the wood, and if you see the priest there tell him that we will shortly come after you, because Lica and two other people have come to us and we have some business with them. Tell him to wait awhile and you stay with him until we get there. Do you understand?—but make sure to walk behind the willow-hedge so that nobody sees you."

"All right!" answered Lae, and turned around to go.

Only now Ghitza began to guess the thoughts of his wife, he could not tear himself away from her, he felt as if he must quiet her about Lica, that

he was not a man of whom to be afraid, and again he wanted to go to her and thank her for her care; but neither could he utter a word nor make a pace back, he feared he would by so doing only frighten her more, and spirited by diverse emotions he sped towards the tavern.

Anna and the two children remained behind.

When he came near the inn, he looked down the river and noticed Lae who was running across the country road down to the willow-plot.

"The bonehead!" he murmured apprehensively to himself. "Now I am betrayed."

Then he turned, explaining to Lica: "I sent him down to the river to get me a fish net that I have there and that's why the fellow is running that way. How do you do?"

"Splendid animals!" said Lica after a while and pointed to the dogs, stroking one of them. Then he looked before him and noticed Anna who came from the garden, carrying one child in her arm and leading the other by the hand. "They scented me half an hour's distance away and I had to lose a whole lot of my time in order to lure them to me."

Ghitza knew what Lica was driving at and he would very much have liked to deal the dog that was nestling against Lica a blow.

"Yes, I heard them bark," he answered. "But I knew that there could be only people who I am meeting here daily. . . ."

"You ought to know," continued Lica, "that dogs bark most peculiarly, when they have people before them; one must understand their barking so as to be able to profit by it; for if they want to throw themselves on one, they bark only once, or twice. . . . The place here is marvelous, too, one can see at an hour's distance everyone who comes near here. Come!" he added, "let's go in. We have something to talk over yet."

"As long as you please," Ghitza answered with decision, following him.

After they entered the room, they remained standing facing each other, both serious, both resolute, both feeling instinctively that each had found his equal.

"Here," began Lica after a while, taking out of his belt a pack of skins that were fastened on a wire ring. "Here are the signs of my various flocks. They are applied to the swine, rather deep in their right ear; each flock has a different sign, as you will be able to see from this pack that I shall leave in your care. When swine are driven past here, you are to see what signs they bear, you

are to remember who has driven the flock and keep silent. I want you to do that!"

Ghitza looked in his face for quite a while but gave no answer.

"We have agreed, haven't we?" asked Lica.

"I don't know anything about it. . . ."

"Why?"

"Well, because," answered Ghitza sternly, "if I were to have my eyes everywhere, I would see nothing, for I am here alone in a wilderness. I have, in fact, two splendid dogs, as you put it, but nevertheless you three are here so suddenly without anyone having had even the slightest idea of your coming. You could murder us all, as we are here, and no one would know that you were the murderers; you could rob us of all that we have, and if we are wise enough we will not complain to any one about it; for you are always in the majority and the stronger, while we are always but a few and the weaker. You told me to do so and so, well, can I help doing it, can I do otherwise, can I say no?"

"Then," Lica laughed, satisfied with himself, "we understand each other. . . ."

"Or better, we do not understand each other. For there is no such thing as a forced agreement. Had you desired to close an agreement with me,

you should have come to me on the straight way and not assailed me from behind an ambush. I can really very easily agree to all you demand and after all do just what I please."

"Let that be my worry!" was Lica's firm answer. "You either do what I please, or you've been boss here too long."

"Lica!" said Ghitza impressively, "don't you believe that I am afraid of you! If you're sensible you had better find another, a peaceable way to win me."

"I know no other way. I don't care how a man feels about it as long as he knows that he is as good as lost if he doesn't do what I like."

Ghitza came closer to him.

"If this were all," he said calmly—"it were all right. After all you don't ask anything unjust from me, nothing but my assistance, and this I would readily give you. But I know you too well not to suspect you of coming to-morrow to ask for more. In that case—you're not the only one. Remember, Lica, there are so many others like you around here, and if I do you a favour then I will have them all come to me. . . ."

"That is not my business," Lica cried scornfully. "And now let me have the keys!"

"What keys?"

"All keys: from the closet, from the drawers, from the chest—all of them," was Lica's cool answer. "Who keeps this inn tries to make money, and you've done it, too. All right then, you are to loan me money."

For a moment Ghitza remained dumbfounded and looked him in the face confusedly.

"I don't want to rob you," Lica continued. "I want to borrow from you, and I will pay you back honestly, with interest and interest on interest—I'll pay you, but naturally, when I feel like it. It would be useless to give you a receipt with my signature, for it would do you no good: If I live and prosper, I'll pay you and even more than would be due you from me, and if I should die meanwhile or meet with failure, then the receipt would be of no service to you anyway."

"Very well, then I'll give you the money, but I'll count it first."

"What for? It's only loss of time."

"Then take as much as you please, but leave some behind so the women won't notice it," and he pointed to the desk in which the money lay.

"Well, now we understand each other." Lica was satisfied.

Ghitza did not reply. He was in violent agitation and would have best liked to throw himself

on Lica and tear him to pieces, if it were not for Lica's companions who were outside and could have come to his rescue. His blood got torpid in his veins as he saw Lica root through the money that he had saved penny by penny, but he had to master himself, for he was in Lica's hand.

"Yes, we understand each other," he said, coming nearer. "And if some day I will do something that displeases you, you will not have to give me back anything, not one single penny."

Spitefully laughing, Lica turned to him.

"Now you're gentle, like a dove. What?"

Ghitza trembled with excitement. He had endured much, but the ironical tone made him lose self-control, and without being able to account for what he was doing he seized his arms from behind and pressed him to him.

"Don't move from the spot or it will be your death," he whispered with a choked voice.

Lica felt that Ghitza was the stronger one, and therefore he asked, glancing concernedly at the door: "What do you want of me?"

"Nothing," answered Ghitza. "You know very well that I won't do anything to you; for I am not alone, I have a wife and children and to them I must be considerate. You stole my money! Enjoy it! You bereaved me of the quiet of my soul,

you have embittered my life! Enjoy it! But don't think that you have me at your mercy, that you can do with me what you please. Don't think that you can scoff at me just any time you please! You can murder me, Lica, you and your fellows, but I have the power to send you to the gallows. So don't provoke me! Don't forget that you made of me a man who hasn't much more to lose, and take care that I don't lose the little I still have! Be on your watch before me!"

Lica made a step back.

"Ha! You're afraid!" continued Ghitza, passing his hands through his hair. "You're afraid and are not ashamed to look out for your fellows so they may come to your help!"

"Certainly not," Lica was smiling. "I would be ashamed of myself, had I come here all by myself."

Ghitza lost more and more his composure and consequently he could not help feeling Lica's supremacy whom nothing could shake out of his indifference.

"And I, too, want your people here so they can see that you are afraid," Ghitza continued after a while. "Here, you fellows!" he shouted out in the yard.

One of the swine-herds came running into the

tavern, while the other remained at the door, looking deferentially to Lica.

"He would like to have a little scrap with me," Lica said, pointing to Ghitza.

"Not at all," the other replied. "I am a reasonable man and know very well what I am doing. I simply wanted to show you that I am not afraid of you."

"But we of you!" answered Lica. "You yourself told me to be on my watch before you, and I will admit that I fear you and that probably never again will I get you so much in my power as today. By the way, remember that no one has opposed me whom I did not know how to get rid of."

"I never intended to oppose you."

"But you might take a fancy to do something that you haven't attempted so far. Renz!"—he addressed one of the two herdsmen—"go, fetter the servant and bring the woman and the two children over here!"

Hardly had he spoken the words, when Ghitza threw himself on Renz, seized him by the chest and prostrated him on the floor. Then he closed the door and shouted in despair:

"Leave the woman alone and don't come too near me or you'll fare bad. Lica, you're a sensi-

ble fellow, so keep out of danger and take care that you don't go too far; rob, pillage, but don't be a common rascal who shows up his cards; ask me first where the servant is and then we'll go together." Taken aback, Lica looked at his companions.

"You saw him run up the cliff; well, then, he won't be back before you're off. I sent him to the Popa * at Fundureni with the word that I will be there a little later, after I have fixed you up."

"That's right!" Renz acknowledged, frightened. "I haven't seen the servant since."

Lica felt that he had lost all composure.

"This I won't forgive you as long as I live!" he said then threateningly to Ghitza.

"You needn't go away with bad intentions!" Ghitza tried to calm him, coming nearer to him.

"You must realize that if you haven't caught me to-day, you never will! Lica! People like me make dangerous servants, but precious friends."

"Did I say that I wanted to make you my servant?" answered Lica, suddenly adopting another tone of voice.

"If you haven't said it and if you hadn't the intention to say it, then, good, then we'll talk as friends with one another." Ghitza had become

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* The colloquial term for the priest of the Greek-Catholic church.

frank. "I will get some wine and we will drink to our common health and good, like people who live together in good understanding and friendship. So much I realize, that no one can be keeper of the 'Lucky Mill' if he does not manage to keep on a good footing with you; but I want you to realize that it is not fear that keeps me back from denying your wishes. You ought to understand that I comply with your desires voluntarily. I gladly help you, as you want me to, but don't forget it is important that the world consider me, now as before, an honest man, such as they know me, for a man who could never live on good understanding with people of your kind."

"You are right," said Lica. "Very well, the world. But we? What are we to take you for?"

"For what the future will prove. Good luck, friends!" and he held out his hand. "If one is wise, he turns the enemy who cannot be vanquished into his confederate!"

They shook hands.

"And the money you leave here, don't you?" Ghitza asked in an undertone.

"The money? No, that goes with me!" Lica replied. "What's in the hand is safe."

"But so that you know! You haven't got me in your hands in spite of that," cried Ghitza and descended into the cellar for cold wine.

"That was thoughtless of me," Lica burst out angrily when he was alone with his companions. "I should have taken your advice and not let that servant get away!"

"Maybe it will be all right this way, too," Renz replied.

"We'll see!" the other herdsman continued. "I am afraid he put something over on us."

"Let that be my look-out!" Lica quieted them, raising his head in pride.

As Lica lived continually on the road he stopped rather frequently at the "Lucky Mill"—once a week, twice, even oftener than that. Only seldom would he stop longer; he would drink a glass of wine, eat something and ride away. Nearly every Sunday afternoon he came to the "Lucky Mill," never without a few of his companions, and then he was gay and in good humor.

Ghitza had always a friendly face when Lica came around, the old woman was good-humored, too, because she saw that Ghitza seemed to be pleased with his guests, only Anna couldn't hide her abhorrence for Lica.

On the Sunday when Lica had appeared so suddenly at the inn great cares had mounted to her heart that made her years older, and whenever she

saw him she had to think of the afternoon and of the fears she experienced.

After Lica had departed that time and she had asked Ghitza what kind of business they had contracted, he had feigned surprise and had answered evasively, that it was nothing of importance and that Lica was his friend. Therefore Anna had not asked further nor ever dared to mention anything about Lica. Whenever Lica came to the inn, she looked at him furtively. "This must be a bad and dangerous man!" she would murmur, shivering.

Quite a time had passed since that incident and Anna felt herself more and more isolated. Since Ghitza had made friends with Lica, he seemed to avoid her, as if he had something to hide from her.

"Ghitza, what have you in common with this man?" she asked once, after Lica had gone away.

"I?" he answered, abashed. "Nothing—nothing at all. The same thing I have in common with anyone else who comes past here: he stops here, talks about this and that, drinks, eats and pays. . . ."

Anna looked long in his face.

"Yes, but always more than he ought to pay," she said poignantly.

"Well, that is the way of people who don't look at their coin before they spend it."

"Ghitza!" she said calmly. "Now don't speak to me as if you were talking to a child. . . . You are a man and you must know what and why you do things. I am asking you only out of my sense of duty, and not because I want to peep into your secrets; for what you can tell me, and what you can't, if there's anyone who does know it, it's you. But I warn you, and would not rest before I say it to you: Lica is a bad, dangerous man. Everyone can see that, everyone who looks into his eyes, who hears his laughter, who observes his look when he is chewing his moustache. Ghitza, he is a fiery man and it cannot be good to have anything to do with him or even to play a common game with him."

"But I have nothing in common with him," Ghitza protested.

"Very well, do what you consider is good, but as for me, I have warned you."

Ghitza would have liked to speak out now, but he couldn't any more since he had denied all association with Lica; he satisfied himself with the intention to tell her another time about it. And truly, what would he have to tell her? What had

happened on a Sunday long ago was now forgotten—and should she even learn that——!

Ghitza always looked at the ears of the swine that were driven past, he even found some of them that wore Lica's signs, but Lica came and went without asking him about it, and so he only noticed all this and kept silent. Lica asked nothing, demanded nothing.

Nevertheless, it seemed that the Szamadau was well informed about all that happened in the mill, and this necessarily surprised Ghitza not a little. Still greater was his surprise when one day he received from Lica six swine that hadn't his signs. For a long time he argued with himself whether he should or should not keep them, finally deciding on the former, so—as he tried to benumb his consciousness—not to come into conflict with Lica. This time he hadn't consulted his wife for he expected too much opposition from that quarter.

Now he avoided her altogether, and she, noticing it, sought not to make even the slightest allusion to this thing.

With the arrival of Autumn, the country road was full day and night with travellers, and even on Sundays the inn was never empty. It is around this time that a great many fairs are held, that every one has something to sell and everybody is

doing good business; Ghitza was making out well, too; yes, even better than during the summer and only seldom would he remain in the tavern by himself for a few hours. The nearer St. Dimitri's day, the busier became the country road.

On one Monday, Lica came to the inn with a few of his companions. It was Buza Rupta, Saila and Renz, who seldom failed to accompany him. There were a few peasants lying full length on the wooden benches outside their carriages in the yard.

Whenever Lica would come he would never stop either beneath the wooden shed or in the tavern, but would walk straight ahead into the little adjoining room where a small table, a few chairs and two beds filled the space. It was meant for some distinguished guest who would have to pass a night at the inn. When Ghitza was not very much occupied he would pass his free time with his wife and children in this room, for their bedroom lay on the opposite side of the building and one had to pass through the kitchen first in order to reach it. There the windows faced the mountains, while in this room they showed to the road, so that while sitting comfortably at the table, one could easily look out over the road, the tavern and the open space in front of the inn.

This time Lica did not go right to the secluded room, but stopped for a short while under the wooden shed in the yard, talked to a few peasants who were lying there, about this and that, asked them where they came from, where they were going and things of this kind. After a while he turned to Ghitza, took him to one side and asked with a tense voice:

"When does the Jew get here for the rent?"

"Who? The landlord?" Ghitza answered in the same tone of voice. "I had intended to go to him myself."

"Yes, the landlord. Don't go, it isn't necessary. He'll be around here, anyway. I have some things to talk over with him."

"All right! Shall I call you when he arrives?"

"Never mind, I'll find it out. Leave that to me."

Although they had conversed softly and, as it seemed, it had been especially Lica's concern that the things that were discussed remain secret, he had said the words—"the Jew—the landlord—leave that to me"—loud enough for the people under the shed to have overheard them.

Consequently, he looked around him somewhat concerned and then continued hurriedly:

"Come, let's go inside!"

In the room, he threw his whip on the table, a gesture which meant that he intended again to give free way to his mad caprices. He had had an argument with Buza Rupta and with Saila, Renz had pacified them and now the new friendship had to be celebrated by a brilliant feast.

After a while, three gypsies made their appearance at the inn—one with a violin, another carrying a clarionet and the third cymbals. Lica ordered them all three to sit down on a bench and perform.

Now, because the gypsies were playing so charmingly, a throng of people assembled in front of the inn. Among them were Anna with the children and the mother-in-law; for three gypsies at the same time—these were indeed rare guests for the Lucky Mill.

At the sound of the maddening airs, Lica had been suddenly seized with an uncontrollable desire to dance, he reached out for Buza Rupta and with him danced around the inn, stamping with such vigor on the floor that his long braids of hair fluttered in the air.

Whenever he came to the inn he said hardly a word to Anna. In fact, he had hardly exchanged ten words with her altogether. But now he grew courageous. He took her by the hands, saying:

"Come, I want to dance with you, so you may know what dancing means. . . ."

Anna turned aside.

He put both his arms around her.

"But I don't feel like dancing!" she answered evasively, and gently unwound herself from his embrace.

"You'll get the desire, later. . . ."

"And for something else, too," Buza-Rupta remarked with a wink.

"Well, I don't care to," Anna replied rigidly and stepped back.

Lica walked angrily away from her.

"Poor me!" Ghitza tried to be jovial. "How capricious my wife has become! Come on, and dance with him, he won't bite away any of your beauty!"

So Anna persuaded herself to dance.

At first, it could easily be noticed that she had forced herself to dance; but what was she to do? After all, why should she not dance? She grew more and more willing. In fact, it aroused her passionate nature when Lica clasped her too closely, and the blood rushed to her face, when he gripped her around the hips so as to swing her. Thus was she and she could not be otherwise. At last, the child of nature in her overpowered her

and she yielded completely to the bewildering vertigo of the dance; Ghitza felt his composure waning as he saw her in her excitement; but he managed to master himself.

"That was fine!" Lica said after a while to Anna, stopping, all out of breath. "I must admit that you held out better than I."

Then he pressed her to his bosom, lifted her up, swinging her powerfully around, pressed a kiss on her lips and carried her in his arms to a bench.

Anna covered her face with both hands and then looked dizzily around her. Lica paced the room, up and down, and wiped his sweat from his face with his shirtsleeves. Then he stopped suddenly and addressed Ghitza angrily:

"What kind of a damned inn is this? One can't have even a woman servant here. Why don't you keep one?"

The people at the door smiled understandingly, Anna started, frightened, and endeavoring to hide the excitement her face showed she slipped out of the room, while the old woman stared before her as if she had not understood the right meaning of Lica's words.

"My God!" she said almost to herself. "What can one do! That is the way of people. Were

they even fairly good, they all have their own thoughts, be they even so small and trifling."

Ghitza made no answer, but he resolved to pay him back in due time for this insult also.

In the evening, Buza Rupta and Saila drove towards Ineu, and Renz departed on the road to the wood of Fundereni, after he had exchanged a few mysterious signs with the Szamadau. Lica remained a few minutes longer among the peasants, and looking westwards, where thick, black clouds were appearing, he said:

"It seems that we will have rain. I would like to stay here overnight. I have money with me and the roads are uncertain, especially now in the Fall. . . ."

He abode by his decision and passed the night at the Lucky Mill.

V

EVER since the roads were being used more, people talked more and more about accidents that had occurred in the vicinity. Only the curve leading to the Lucky Mill, which had before gained, in the mouth of the people, a reputation for safety, remained spared from all such accidents within the last year. The talk spread rapidly, therefore, that the neighborhood, as far as an hour's distance, had been perfectly safe since Ghitza had settled down there. But the gendarmerie of Ineu would nevertheless not restrain itself from patrolling even this neighborhood with distinct concern and nearly every day their reconnoitering reached as far as the Lucky Mill.

For Ghitza it was always a reason to be glad when the gendarmes would come around, and he took greatest pains to make them his friends: they always had their food and drink for nothing, and as persistently as some of them tried to pay

for what they had consumed, he would not allow it.

It was mainly for the Sargeant Pintea, one of them, that Ghitza had a warm interest kindled in him. Not on account of his exterior, for Pintea could hardly have been called good-looking; his features were not even regular: a head in which two black eyes flared restlessly, reposed on a short, compact body; on the narrow forehead a blow had left behind a blood-red mark; the cheekbones pierced poignantly out of the face and the upper lip was clean shaven. It was his quiet, serious attitude that had attracted Ghitza. True, he had never been alone with him and therefore could not have a sincere talk with him, but nevertheless Ghitza had all confidence in him. This is the way, it would seem, people are! Many a time one sees some one for the first time, and one is drawn to him, without being able to account immediately for the "why?" This someone was in this case Pintea. He also seemed to feel himself at home when he was around, for one could read in his face that it was painful to him to separate himself from them. Anna and the children had found a place in his heart, and he would certainly have struck right and left, had any one spoken badly of Ghitza in his presence, even if the speaker were

in the right. For this reason Ghitza thought of Pintea as the only one with whom he could speak openly of all his troubles, and he would have liked indeed to have Pintea here, now, when he was to sleep for a whole night under the same roof with Lica.

All disquieting thoughts that had been slumbering within him and that he had successfully chased away, rekindled in him and unrest overcame him, as never before.

When Lica had told him that he had something to "say" to the landlord, his first doubts were aroused. His unrest grew when Lica had kissed his wife before his eyes and had dropped the low allusion to the servant girl. And besides, he knew well enough that Lica wasn't the man to be afraid of uncertain roads and way-layers, and, therefore, he asked himself continually, but without finding an adequate answer: "Why did he stay here? Why did he tell the people that he had money with him? Why this peculiar language? What has he in mind? . . ."

"Why? Why?" his consciousness resounded in agony. "Maybe I am tormenting myself with vain fears," he tried to quiet himself. "Perhaps all these things have happened accidentally, perhaps no after-thought induced his words. . . ."

In the course of time he had forgotten altogether about the agreement he had made with Lica, and only now and then he thought of the money he had lost to him. But in this moment the whole past shot through his brain: the agreement with Lica, the lost money, the swine without their sign which he had received from Lica and the consequences that this acceptance might have had, and there was a mysterious voice in him that seemed to whisper: "Now is the hour when you may close accounts with him. . . ." It was hardly half a year since he had settled down at the Lucky Mill and business had improved daily. He had quite a lot of swine being fattened, two cows that gave plenty of milk, a pretty little carriage and two fiery horses, and he still had money in the chest, not much, but sufficient to live on for a year, or two. And now, when everything was going so well, when there were prospects for an ever better future, now Lica wanted to "speak" to the landlord, undoubtedly so as to have another one lease the mill, another one who would suit him better.

But he did not want to leave the place, he could not possibly leave the place which in such a short time would make him an independent, free man.

Again the pact he had made with Lica shot

through his head, again he was forced to think of the money that he lost at that time, of the gruesome winter-days that had gone before and of the times when he had no swine in the stall, no cows, no pretty carriage, no fiery horses and no counted money in the chest. For a moment a wild joy came over him at the thought that Lica would play a part in his getting rid of all these cares. But this enthusiasm lasted only for a few moments, even less than that, and his instinct told him immediately that he would repent, that he would repent all his life if he were forced to leave the Lucky Mill now. The thought that Lica, on whom all these matters depended, was under the same roof with him, let him have no peace. He would have gone to him and asked: "Speak out, man, what do you intend to do? What do you want from me? Tell me truly what you want me to do for you, that we might live in good understanding. . . ." But again, before long, his old pride returned. "What do I care! I will not give in," he said to himself with decision. "I will not give in even if I were to go to pieces on account of it. . . ."

But amidst these spiteful decisions he felt himself lonely and forsaken. Anna, who before had been the dearest thing to him in the whole world,

had become estranged; and when they were again, now and then, by themselves, a damp, dreary cloud hung over the room and the silence was no more interrupted by her childlike playfulness. She had become estranged, and, yes, what pained him more, he himself had become a stranger to her. From the moment she had so vehemently manifested her suspicion of his association with Lica, his love for her had definitely died. He would sometimes have sacrificed his life, could he have only experienced again the joy which he had felt sometimes while looking into her dear eyes; but it was all in vain, she could be no more for him what she had been. Her charming nature, her svelte figure and her melodious voice which had wrought on him before the most subtle enchantment left him now entirely cold; his heart was too much saturated with bitterness for him to be able to experience acute feelings at all. And yet, it was only for her sake that he suffered the pains of his actually poisoned existence, only for her sake that he had given up his former occupation and had settled down as the host in the Lucky Mill. For her sake had he forgotten himself and all around him, had he ventured into everything even to his utmost until he had been driven into the snare wherefrom there was no escape. And she was the first not to un-

derstand him and not to notice that he had to fight a terrible fight, but had taken him for a servant of the evil against which he tried in vain to struggle. . . .

For this reason he was thinking now, when he felt the necessity of a sympathetic heart on which he could work himself up, not of Anna, who lay beside him and who enjoyed with regular breathing a quiet sleep, but of Pintea, whose open-hearted look had so often given him consolation and relief. He would have liked best to have the horses harnessed and, although it was night already, to drive to Ineu and get Pintea. Gradually he quieted himself and at last he could not avoid the question: "Why should I have more confidence in a friend than in my wife, in my legitimate wife? . . ."

All were sleeping in the inn and even Ghitza who had gradually regained quietude, had fallen asleep, when the dogs suddenly burst into a loud barking, and barking ever more and more furiously ran toward the ravine.

Frightened, Ghitza wakened, jumped from the bed to the window and looked outside into the pitch black night.

He could not distinguish anything; but realized that someone in the house must have made his ap-

pearance, as the dogs were running back softly growling.

A quarter of an hour later he saw a man and a tall, broad-shouldered woman pass his window toward the gate.

"So that's what it was!" Now he thought he knew the reason why Lica had wanted to stay over night at the inn, and felt ashamed of his suspicions.

"That woman looks more like a mountain giant!" The words came involuntarily from his mouth as he saw the large figure pass, and was about to retire, calmed, from the window.

"Who's there?" the servant Marzy asked in the same moment.

"A friend!" a male voice replied.

Ghitza again became disquieted. As little as he could distinguish in the dark, it had nevertheless aroused his suspicion as to whether the person who had accompanied the woman was really Renz. Now, after he had heard that person's voice he felt sure that it wasn't Renz, but an entirely strange man. "Why, then, hadn't the dogs barked at him? Why did Marzy let him pass? Why hadn't Renz come?

"Why? Why?" he exclaimed angrily. "It's

dreadful that even the slightest incident can put one in a deadly fright!"

He wanted to go out himself and ascertain who had come.

"What is it, Ghitza?" asked Anna, who had awaked and was raising herself in bed.

"Nothing! What should it be?" he answered. "Renz has come. He must have forgotten something, or maybe he wants to tell Lica something. . . ."

"Ghitza, that wasn't Renz's voice," Anna answered decidedly. "Please go and see! Who are those people lying around on the road in the middle of the night?"

"Don't be frightened," Ghitza tried to calm her. "I saw them with my own eyes, and if they were not familiar people, Marzy would not have let them in. . . ."

"Marzy?" she answered. "I don't like this Marzy at all."

"My God! But you're distrustful of everyone! Be reasonable and quiet yourself!"

She tried to be brave; but her whole body trembled.

They had fallen asleep again when the dogs started their barking for the second time.

"What can that be?" Ghitza cried out, terri-

fied. Terror had again overpowered him, he could hardly trust his eyes, he was in doubt whether he had seen rightly when he noticed that tall, broad-shouldered woman walk towards the tavern. So he jumped to the window again and looked out, stricken with alarm.

The man and woman walked ahead with fast steps.

But it seemed that it wasn't the same companion as at first, that it was even Lica who walked now beside the woman.

Had Anna been asleep, Ghitza would have followed them, to learn who they were.

"They are going away," said Ghitza softly.

"All right, Ghitza," Anna answered. "Now let us sleep!"

But she couldn't fall asleep again. She had been wakened out of the first sleep, now cares arose in her mind, and these, with the heat, made even the thought of sleeping impossible. Ghitza had fallen immediately into a good, sound sleep; outside, the wind howled grim and Anna pulled the cover over her head without closing an eye during the whole night.

Towards dawn, the dogs for the third time began their barking.

Breathlessly, Anna crept to the window. She

saw Lica returning all by himself from the direction of Fundureni.

Now she thought she understood everything.

Lica had been somewhere and had committed something with Ghitza's approval. . . . "My God!" she was sobbing, terrified, "What has befallen me, poor woman!"

But Ghitza was her husband; she wished that the moment she had been at the window she would have turned blind so she would have seen nothing and learned nothing, and when she thought of the possibility that others might have seen him as well, that others might also have understood the connection between things, she felt the blood in her veins come to a standstill.

When Lica wakened rather sleepily the next morning, it was already late.

It was raining and he remarked in the presence of the peasants that he had been right the day before when he predicted that the weather would change; it had been better if he had gone the day before, he wouldn't have had to travel, at least, as he would to-day, through mud.

The night before, Ghitza had resolved to wait only for Lica's departure when he would get his carriage ready to drive to Ineu for Pintea. Dur-

ing the night, he had slept well, and now, when he saw Lica again, he lost his resolution. After all, thinking it out precisely, he did not know exactly what he could have said to Pintea. The suspicions that tormented him the night before had vanished now like a bad dream, and since he knew now that Lica had also his weak side, he seemed to see him in a better, more open-hearted light.

For the first time in her life Anna felt a real affection for Lica, and when he departed she wished him with an honest heart a "come again." Her husband's life was fettered to this man's!

After Lica's departure, she called Ghitza aside and said to him:

"I want to tell you something, not exactly now, later when we will be left to ourselves. Wait on these people, they want to go!"

While Ghitza was figuring what was coming to him from the peasants, he asked himself continually what his wife could have to tell him, so he finished with the people quicker than was his wont; but they had not yet gone when Pintea, accompanied by two gendarmes, entered the tavern.

He had come with a more hurried pace than usual and was, contrary to his custom, silent.

"What other people, besides peasants, were here yesterday?" he asked, after he had walked into the

room near the tap-room, with his companions, and closing the door behind him.

"I cannot remember any more," Ghitza said indifferently.

"But I have to know!" Pintea continued shortly and resolutely.

Ghitza looked him and his companions jovially in the face, and then said:

"If you were here all the time I could speak openly about it, but since you come around only now and then, be reasonable and don't ask me to expose myself to dangers and perils, as I would were I to tell you the truth and not lies. I don't know what urges you to ask me questions, but I answer once for all time that I shall not answer such inquiries. If this explanation is not sufficient for you, do with me what you please, fetter me, throw me in prison, but I will not relate anything."

"If it will be necessary we surely won't abstain from the last!" Pintea answered. "Even if you were right—from your point of view."

Then they spoke of other things, and Pintea signalled his companions to leave him alone with Ghitza.

After they had left the room, Pintea looked for

a while before him, and then, addressing Ghitza, he said:

"You tell Lica everything that happens here and not me. . . ."

"So far I haven't told Lica anything. . . ."

"Never mind! He knows everything that possibly could help him. . . ."

"Possibly!" Ghitza replied. "But not through me. . . ."

Pintea looked longer in his eyes, with a sharp gaze, as if to convince himself whether Ghitza was speaking the truth.

"Then," he said, after a pause, "you have, perhaps, a servant that reports everything to him?"

"I don't think so," Ghitza replied, shrugging his shoulders. "But from now on I will be on the watch."

Suddenly, a thought flashed through his brain and he turned shortly to Pintea:

"Do you know Lica?"

"Yes, I know him."

"Well?"

"Very well! Haven't we been arrested together? Haven't we been locked up together?"

"What? You've been in jail?" Ghitza asked hotly.

"Yes! Both of us, Lica and I, were stealing

horses, and they were pursuing us. Lica had been shot in the foot, and, consequently, we had to surrender, otherwise they would never have caught us. . . ."

"So you've been in jail already?" Ghitza asked slowly.

"Surely!" Pintea laughed. "How else could I be what I am to-day? Simply because I know all the paths here and the lanes of the neighborhood and all the ways and means of my former associates! . . . But what did you want to know of Lica?"

At hearing this news, Ghitza had forgotten altogether that he wanted to learn something of Lica through Pintea; he began to mistrust and to fear him, in whom he had felt the greatest confidence till the minute before.

"I would like to know," he spoke, hardly audible, "whether Lica hasn't a weakness for women! . . ."

"For women?" Pintea replied. "No, for nothing, for nothing at all in the world. Yes, now and then, it gets him, too, but one couldn't call it a weakness. He has only one weakness, a single one: to flaunt, to brag, to keep the entire world in terror of him and to scoff at the devil and his mother-in-law. To scoff at us, Ghitza, at us!" he

continued passionately. "Ghitza, now I am thirty-eight years old, I swear to you, I'll hang myself if I become forty and haven't showed him by that time that he is not the only one in the world, that there are others, too, who are more than he is. He played me one trick, and for that one I'll never forgive him all my life!"

"Now I understand everything!" Ghitza cried, breaking again into passion. "He told me yesterday to hire a maid, that is to say that I hire a spy. . . ."

Now he considered how he should tell Pintea all that had occurred between him and Lica; but for a moment he reasoned with himself whether it were not better to keep quiet. . . .

"For you ought to know," he began in an undertone, "Lica has many. . . ."

"Stop!" Pintea interrupted him. "He wants a maid, let him have one. I'll pick one out, just leave it to me!"

"All right," Ghitza replied, "if you think it necessary. . . ."

"I haven't any more time to lose, so, be quick, who was here yesterday?"

"Pintea! Don't ask me, for I can't answer you. . . ."

"But let us understand each other!" Pintea

asked with a sad voice. "One of the two: you either tell me everything, or you let me go to the devil. Very well, you are silent to other people, but don't you want to tell me even a thing,—me?"

"You, least of all!" Ghitza assured him. "For if you know, then the whole world knows; it is your damned duty not to keep anything secret. Ask the peasants, ask my servant, force him to say what he knows, as far as I am concerned, do with him what you please! Naturally, I'll discharge him, I'll chase him to the devil if he'll divulge anything, but you'll never find out anything through me."

"I understand," Pintea answered, after he had thought something over for a while. "Let it be as you said. By the way, do you know what the matter is? Last night, two men, only two men assailed the Jew, beat him so that he can hardly keep himself on his legs and robbed him of God knows how much, according to what he tells us. . . ."

Ghitza could not grasp the story quite well.

"What Jew?" he asked. "The landlord?"

"Yes, the landlord! And it's Lica's achievement! Only Lica could have done that! It's his custom to do such a thing with only one or two of his fellows at the most; he is so much the surer of his companions."

Not one moment longer did Ghitza doubt that the two men were Saila and Buza Rupta who had driven the evening before to Ineu. But he dared not say it.

"Lica, it couldn't have been," he answered with conviction. "And, the landlord knows him. . . ."

"That's just it!" Pintea replied. "The two men had their faces covered, and the landlord claims it seemed to him that one of the two men was Lica. . . ."

"It's impossible!" Ghitza was insolent. "Lica spent the whole night here in the inn and just left a few minutes ago."

For a while, Pintea was thoughtful.

"When did he arrive?"

"Yesterday at noon. . . ."

"With whom did he associate all this time?"

"You'll find that out from the servant. It is very likely that it was he who arranged this entire thing. I think I have enough proofs. . . ."

"Not in the least," Pintea warded off, rising from his seat. "Know this one thing and never forget it all your life! Lica never depends on anyone else!"

"Now, have your horses harnessed and take your servants along, we'll have to go to town. My two companions will remain here."

VI

For one moment Anna remained speechless when she learned from Ghitza that he and the servants had to go to Ineu with Pintea. She could read from his face that something unusual had happened, but she quieted herself soon when she remembered that Ghitza and Pintea were friends; now she thought she understood why Ghitza had always taken so much trouble to gain Pintea's friendship, and consequently she was pleased to realize that it was just he who was to accompany Ghitza on this extraordinary trip.

It was easy to quiet her mind with all this, but not her heart. That was beating harder than ever in fear, all the acute fright that had tortured her the whole night now gained complete control over her.

"Mother!" she said after a while. "How do you find things here?"

"Why, all right," the old woman replied. "You couldn't say that business isn't good. . . ."

"Oh, business is all right," Anna answered. "But haven't you noticed any difference between us and Ghitza? He is quiet and lives only with himself, he doesn't speak with us any more as he did before, and for some time we have ceased to live as husband and wife. . . ."

"Well, times have changed," the old woman retorted. "Ghitza is an industrious and thrifty fellow, who endeavors all the time to save a lot for himself and his home. He has, like every man, his weakness: he is full of joy and pride when he sees how his capital rises around him. It is good that he has such a weakness, so don't mind it: suffer for the moment for he does it for a reason that will be a great asset to you later. And, besides, you haven't so much to suffer. . . ."

"Very well, mother," Anna said, "but if he were to look for dishonest profit? We are here, too; he ought to tell us what he is doing. . . ."

For a while, the old woman remained pensive, then she said with a touch of sadness:

"My child! I know no answer to your question, neither do I want to think about it. . . . There is enough misery in this world, and every one bears it in his fashion and his part of it; if it happened that a great deal of it came to you, still there is no remedy for it, you must bear your unhappiness

and nothing can be of help to you, nothing, not good counsel nor reasoning, no riches nor worldly power. . . ."

Anna was still lost in her contemplations about what she had just heard, when the rolling of a lordly carriage came from outside.

Since Ghitza was not home, Anna and the old woman ran out to receive the guests.

It was raining in streams.

The lackey jumped from his seat and opened the glass door of the carriage in which was a woman of probably twenty-eight years, well built and dressed in black. She had large blue eyes, golden hair and a somewhat full face. At her side sat a boy of about five years who looked pale and sickly.

She signalled the servant, who went quickly into the inn-yard and looked at Anna with a glance that might well have been interpreted as asking whether she could not find a secluded room into which she could withdraw.

Anna led her to the room beside the tap room.

"What a beautiful woman . . ." the old lady exclaimed, following them.

Presently, while they were about to enter the room, a flash of lightning pierced through the dark clouds, followed by a groan of thunder that made the entire vale tremble.

"My God!" the lady exclaimed, remaining motionless on the threshold.

"Do close the windows, please, lest the lightning should strike us."

"A real God's wonder, now in the Fall," said the old woman, crossing herself and closing the windows. "Just be at ease, dear madam! God strikes only whom he wants to punish. . . ."

"God, and God, and again God!" the lady exclaimed indignantly.

"Is there anything you wish?" Anna asked, after the lady had seated herself.

"Nothing, except that the rain stop so we may continue our travelling," she answered over her shoulder.

Anna departed and closed the door behind her.

Meanwhile, the driver was unharnessing the horses and leading them into the stable. The other servant stood under the wooden framework, leaned against a beam, and now and then threw a glance into the tavern, where the two gendarmes were sitting.

"The lady is very weary," Anna said to the servant when she had come near him.

He raised himself, arranged his sleeve on which he had leaned, and answered:

"Yes, she is weary. . . ,"

"Where are you going?" Anna asked.

"I don't know," the servant answered, looking at the same time sharply in her face to convince himself whether it would be wise to speak to her openly. "I think, to Ineu . . . we are for the first time in this vicinity. . . . The swine droves are around here, aren't they?"

"Yes, here," Anna answered. "All over this neighborhood. Has she some, too? . . ."

"So they say," he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

"For whom is she mourning?"

"For her husband, who shot himself about three weeks ago."

"Shot himself?" Anna cried, terrified. "Why?"

"No one knows," he answered, again shrugging his shoulders. "You can easily see," he continued, moving away from her, "something must have happened, there must be something behind it. . . ."

"Poor thing!" Anna exclaimed, moved.

While Anna was telling the old woman what she had learned from the servant, the driver came in and sat down by the servant on the bench.

"The devil take them altogether! The horses, the wagon and our lady!" he cursed. "I feel a

great inclination to leave them all here in the wilderness and go along on my way. . . ."

"But be quiet, she hears you!" the servant called to him, loud enough for the lady to understand him, as well as she must have understood the driver's words. "Be reasonable!" he then continued in a low tone. "Don't you know that we'll have our pockets full when we return from Ineu! . . ."

"Well, have you made arrangements with the hostess?" the driver asked.

"It can't be done, she is not of our sort," the servant replied. "She won't be game! Never mind, console yourself, in Ineu I have my man, and there we'll stay at least a week. . . ."

"May God inspire the Szamadau to detain us at least until next Sunday!" the driver exclaimed.

The servant winked, a sign that he could manage this, too.

Then they looked at each other, as if each of them had to trust something to the other, but dared not begin.

"Of what were you thinking just now?" the driver commenced after a while.

"Hm!" the servant answered, smiling. "I believe the same thing as you were thinking. . . . But what does it matter to us?" he continued. "Isn't it so? What does it matter to you? What

does it matter to me? This much I know: whenever we go to Ineu we return with money, with lots of it! . . ."

"But I'd like to know where our mistress gets it from," the driver replied. "Because, to speak the truth, I don't believe she has so many droves that she could always get so much money. . . ."

"I don't know, either," the servant answered, throwing frightened glances around.

"I don't know, either," he repeated, bending over to the driver. "But since the master died there is many a thing that seems suspicious to me. You know, they say a whole lot about the Szamadau. . . . And whenever we return from Ineu, our mistress goes for a few days over into Austria . . . and then the golden chain, for which they'd have imprisoned our master had he not shot himself. . . . I remember having seen that chain in Ineu, quite well I remember, the last time we'd been there. . . ."

"So you think the Szamadau robs and she sells it then?" the driver asked with the mien of the unbeliever.

"I don't know anything definite, but so it seems to me. We'll see the rest, you just leave that to me; for if there is anything in this story, then we're cared for, both of us. . . ."

"How's that?"

"You just leave it to me!" he said to him, jumping from his seat in order to receive his mistress' orders.

She had come out of the room and walked into the open to see whether the rain had not slackened in its fearfulness, for it would have been expecting too much were one to think that it would soon stop altogether.

She could not endure it any longer in the room, excited as she was; she gave orders to have the horses harnessed because she felt no desire to remain in this place over night, they should hurry so that they might reach Ineu before night.

Now the driver and the servant began to contradict her loudly, one could not drive in such weather, the horses would fail utterly, it was impossible to advance even one step in such a storm and with the miserable roads; but she could not be argued out of her decision. Anna tried in vain to convince her of the advantage that would result from passing the night at the inn; she ought not have any fears, for Ghitza, the innkeeper, would be back presently, and, besides, there were two gendarmes at the inn.

"In fact, we don't know how long we'll stay here," one of them said. "But better you do not

leave now. It is nearly two o'clock. You'll hardly be in Ineu before dark, and besides the roads are very uncertain. . . ."

"What do you want to accompany me?" she asked the gendarmes.

"We can't do that!" one gendarme answered. "We have to stay here till we get other orders."

"Then harness the horses!" she cried scornfully to the servants. "You know very well that I never want anything for nothing from you." Then she asked the hostess for the bill and threw a paper note on the table.

Anna took up a piece of paper, totalled up on it what the lady had had, then she looked some time on the paper bill and asked:

"Would you mind giving me another bill? A corner is torn off this one, and I don't understand much about paper money. . . ."

Smiling, the woman took from her satchel a pack of brand new bills, and gave her one of them. Then she went out.

Anna looked compassionately after her. At the sight of this unfortunate, she had regained her lost composure, and the feeling that she thought herself happier than the other woman had given her strength again. Since Ghitza had departed, the strangest suppositions had found their way into

her brain. Indeed, she knew nothing of the robbery, for Ghitza did not have the time to tell it to her, and the gendarmes could not betray their order to watch everything that happened at the inn by telling her of the robbery; but she felt that something was at stake that might be decisive in Ghitza's life. She found enough support in what she had seen the night before and in the fact that Ghitza had gone so quickly. Then again she dismissed her suspicions: it was impossible that Ghitza had mixed himself up in unclean business. "No!" her thoughts ran. "Ghitza is a good, honest man, he is too reasonable to let himself be led astray in such dubious undertakings, he doesn't want to know anything about such things, he doesn't want to have anything to do with them, he doesn't want to conjure upon himself the hate of bad men!" Since she had learned the fate of the unfortunate lady, this thought would not leave her any more; impatiently she awaited Ghitza's return to fling herself on his neck and to console him with a fond word.

Some time after the carriage with the lady had gone away, the rain stopped and a sharp wind blew from the top of the Bihor that pushed back the fog and let the blue sky appear ever more and more.

"May it become fair!" Anna prayed. She was standing before the inn and looked in turn at the road whence Ghitza should have come and at the clouds that passed above her head.

Time passed, but Ghitza's carriage was not yet in sight; and the gruesome presentiments which she had succeeded in chasing away again took possession of her soul.

VII

WHILE driving to Ineu, Ghitza had found sufficient time to realize in what a predicament he had involved himself.

Now he doubted not even a moment longer that the two men with the covered faces who had robbed the landlord were Saila and Buza Rupta. It would not be hard for him to bring evidence that never in his life had he had anything in common with these two; but if it were to be found out that he had drunk with them and that immediately after it, they had committed the robbery, it could then throw a bad light upon him. The thought caused him even more worry that perhaps Lica could be involved in it. Once before the judge, with the crucifix and the burning candles in front of him, he could no more deny that he had played a common game with Lica, he would have to avow all they had agreed to between themselves, and the approximate consequences would be: either Lica would be found guilty and sentenced, and

then he, as a man who had been in so close connection with a sentenced criminal could not escape punishment himself; or Lica would be acquitted and then he could be sure of Lica's revenge. His relation to Lica occupied him so much that the nearer they came to Ineu, the more he forgot all the incidents of the previous night. He had to confess to himself, that whether it was from human weakness, or on account of having been forced, he had committed things that must necessarily load a great deal of suspicion upon him; he realized that he had acted not entirely guiltlessly and he feared that at this time his guilt might be exposed as well. Had Ghitza been a man of an open character he would have told all this to Pintea, without keeping even the most trivial incident secret, he could, perhaps, have been able to persuade Pintea to arrange things so that his relation to Lica would not have had to be touched on at all; but he feared he would lose Pintea's affection were he to tell him all these things, Pintea, who hated Lica to death. He repented that he had not told him everything while they were in the tavern, when his behavior toward Lica would not have looked so suspicious.

Ghitza turned red when they arrived in Ineu. It was hard for him to be seen accompanied by a gendarme after it had become known in the whole

neighborhood that the night before a murder had been committed. Had he felt himself totally guiltless he would have consoled himself with the hope that sooner or later his innocence would be proved, and all these people who were gathering around the carriage, curious to see him and eager to make malicious remarks, would be cheated of their scorn. But he had lost this consolation long ago!

The little carriage stopped in front of the gendarmerie.

While the servants were unharnessing the horses, a throng gathered in front of the armory, and the denser the throng outside became, the emptier Ghitza felt his head, the darker grew everything before his eyes.

"I would like to tell you something!" he addressed Pintea.

Pintea, who since the departure from the Lucky Mill had exchanged hardly more than a few words with him, looked at him, perplexed.

"That's just what we need!" he said when he saw that the servants were away. "Someone just has to see us talk secretly together! Be sensible and depend on me!"

It is hard, immensely hard for us, when we want to say something that comes from the depths of

our heart to someone dear to us and we cannot say it; but a gripping awe takes possession of us when we know that these few words would have sufficed to destroy the wrong opinion that the other person has of us, and Ghitza felt the infinite pain of this moment when he saw Pintea walk away.

Instinctively, he moved away from the gate around which the gaping crowd was assembled and hid behind a wall that surrounded the armory.

"Yes," he murmured to himself. "I am a heartless man. I should not have gone away before I had told her why I had to go, I should even have asked her whether she had anything to say to me. . . ."

Meanwhile, Pintea led Lae, the servant, before the sheriff. He was a svelte, lean gentleman, who was continually turning his moustache between his fingers, and walked restlessly through the room and addressed the people rather harshly.

Poor Lae did not even know what it was all about; but a look at his master sufficed to force the conviction upon him that at the worst it could turn out to be a most disadvantageous affair for him; he trembled vehemently and assured his hearers continually that he knew nothing, that he was busy all day in the stables and went to bed early. But Lae's excited behavior only strengthened the sher-

iff's suspicions, and seeing that he could not get the desired information by gentle methods, he decided to use other means. Lae confessed to the following: On one Sunday afternoon the Szamadau Lica had come to the Lucky Mill with two other of his fellows and had wakened him from his sleep with heavy blows; then his master had sent him to the Popa of Fundureni, but he had not gone there for fear and had hidden in the woods; a few days later he had gone on the pastures to drive the cows home; there he had met Lica and Renz who beat him hideously and threatened to break his bones if he would again spy. Since then he had kept away from Lica and his fellows, he had never spoken to them or otherwise dealt with them.

Pintea wrinkled his forehead when he heard this. He knew Lica too well not to be able to conclude why Lica had chosen a Sunday afternoon to pay the innkeeper a visit; but Lae's testimony was so devoid of all coherence, that he thought it wisest not to put too much weight on it.

But the sheriff, who was more experienced in such affairs, was fully convinced he was on the trail of a new criminal. So he called the second servant also, Marzy, whom he questioned very accurately on this point. Marzy, who did not seem

to be taken very much aback, knew nothing to relate about the incident of that Sunday, as he was not in Ghitza's services at that time. From the rest of the examination it became known that Ghitza was in possession of a brass ring on which were all the signs of Lica's pigs burnt into pig skins, that Ghitza had on different occasions received swine from Lica, that last Monday (that is yesterday), Lica, Renz, Buza Rupta, and Saila and Ghitza had sat together at one table in the inn, that they had conversed secretly and as far as he could understand they had mentioned something about the landlord, that towards the evening Buza Rupta and Saila had gone towards Ineu, Renz had gone towards the hills, and that Lica had passed the night in the inn. Towards midnight the dogs had become restless, so he went out, and seeing a man and a woman, asked who they were. Renz had answered, "Friends." Towards dawn he had awakened again on account of the dogs' barking and had seen Renz and that woman depart.

Pintea knew enough. At first he was surprised. "So Ghitza is, so to speak, Lica's associate," he murmured bitterly. "The marks which he puts on his swine he has with him, takes presents from him, and he was most assuredly in an agreement

with Buza Rupta and Saila, who had gone to Ineu purposely to attack the landlord. . . ."

The sheriff would have liked it better, had there been someone else by to see how he had in less than twenty-four hours found out the criminals, and to give him the due laurels for it. But Pintea who on such occasions reasoned harder and slower and even acted so, was not inclined to join in the sheriff's triumphant shoutings, all the less since things were supposed to have happened that he did not believe. He thought Ghitza an honest man, and even now that he heard so much against Ghitza's credit, even now he was ready for any sacrifice for his sake. It was impossible for him to change his opinion of Ghitza so soon, he would have had to blush were he to confess to himself that he had been deceived so grossly. Ghitza had grown into his heart too deeply for him to so quickly free himself of the good opinion he had about him. For this reason he started out this time more carefully than usual: for he had not heard only the accusing testimony of Marzy; an inner voice had said to him: "But what if you really have deceived yourself?" So he took his time to think the matter over, and asked the sheriff to keep only Marzy imprisoned.

"I cannot so easily believe that all he said is

true," he tried to explain his demand. "Lica does not depend on anyone in this world, he does not easily show his weakness and with people like the innkeeper of the Lucky Mill he does not become confidential so quickly. There is something else behind this, and you may be sure that I'll drive it out of Marzy."

Then he went back to fetch Ghitza, who had waited all the time nervously.

"I want to tell you," he whispered into his ear, "that if you can't give sufficient bail, they won't let you go. . . ."

Ghitza was as if paralysed.

"And to know that it's you who made all this trouble for me!" he brought out reproachfully with a dull voice.

"Be reasonable!" Pintea advised him. "I can't help it. . . ."

"Very well!" said Ghitza, lifting his head in scorn, as one who had gathered all his strength and felt himself big enough, able to renounce other help.

"You are a friend of Lica, the Szamadau?" said the sheriff tersely, after Ghitza had told him that he had the night before drunk in company with Lica, Saila and others.

Ghitza had seen the question coming, but, nev-

ertheless, he felt the ground slip from under his feet when he heard it thrown at him. He recovered quickly, for he had to answer momently.

"A friend?" he replied. "I could not exactly claim that I am his friend, at least I know that he is not mine. But he is a man who lives continually on travel, who stops many a time at my inn, in a word, with whom I can't very well afford to be at odds. . . ."

"So? You would not like to be at odds with him?" scoffed the sheriff. He had realized immediately that but with one clever question he would come to the bottom of the situation. "But what do you derive from this not 'being at odds' with him?"

"Derive? Not exactly that. But you must realize that it would mean damage for me, were I to be at odds with him. For," he continued slowly, "he eats and drinks, he and his people, and this is my business, for this reason have I settled down on the middle of the road, so that I may earn something from such people. . . ."

"He pays," continued the sheriff, weighing his every word, "well, naturally?"

"Yes," answered Ghitza, confused. "And if he has no money at hand, he gives me swine instead. . . ."

"So you get swine from him?" interrupted the sheriff, stepping close in front of him. "You know very well that the Szamadau Lica is a much distrusted fellow, that the swine he gives you . . . might have been stolen?"

At these words, Ghitza felt a chill sting his body.

It was unjust to ask him to divulge his connection to Lica in the presence of a man he had seen for the first time in his life, and this before Pintea, whose friendship he had played away just because he would not give him any details about the matter. But he had to answer this question also and tell the full truth; for he knew what Lica was going to say afterwards.

"I have all the signs that Lica burns on his swine, they are scratched on fur pieces that are on a brass ring that Lica gave me," he answered indifferently.

"So!" replied the sheriff. "He has given you all his signs! And it never happened that he gave you swine that hadn't any of these signs on them?"

"Yes, it did," he answered strongly as one who was setting his own house afire. Then he looked at Pintea, as if he wanted to say: "That was for you!"

The sheriff was losing even the last remnants of

his composure when he saw the indifference with which Ghitza gave his testimony.

"But don't you know," he threw himself, shrieking, at him, "that only the thief associates with the thief, and that the law punishes him who accepts stolen property in the same way as the thief himself?"

Ghitza looked over at Pintea again and saw how he struggled with himself to master his red anger. How his eyes glittered and his forehead wrinkled! Then slowly, he lifted his head, brushed his coat with his hand, trying to smooth out some wrinkles, and answered, quiet again, while the veins at his forehead were swelling into thicker and always thicker masses:

"Mr. Sheriff, don't shout that way at me, for you have no reason for it. Yes, it's so, I received the signs from Lica to tell him whether among the droves that were driven before my inn there were any that had been stolen from his flocks. Yes, what's even more yet, I received swine from him that did not wear his signs; it seemed suspicious to me but I did not come here to tell you my—— But," he continued passionately, "don't you throw that word at me, or I shall be forced to throw it back in your face! If you haven't the power to keep the roads clean of 'much mistrusted'

fellows, for one of which you take Lica, be at least just and don't be too cruel to people whom you could have saved from being forced to have anything to do with 'much suspected' fellows, and from having to become their tools."

Ghitza regretted right away having said this, for he knew it was only pouring oil into the fire, but he could not control himself, all that had lain in his soul for so long a while had to break through, especially now when he knew Pintea was around, for whom he wanted everything to seem in a clear light.

But Pintea was not satisfied, for he hadn't heard all he wanted to, and what he heard was said only because Ghitza was forced to it; when they were sitting alone in the tavern, he wouldn't mention a single word about it.

The sheriff's face had become fire-red and if he had had a little less self-control, he would have raised his hand to strike Ghitza. But he restrained himself, for he saw that now he had Ghitza in his hands; he could play with him hide-and-seek, like a cat with a mouse.

"I understand," he said after a while, "you associated with Lica because you were forced to do so. To me it matters little what your reason was in becoming his helper, it is sufficient that

I have to put you on the same basis as him. Was Lica alone the whole night?"

"No," answered Ghitza, plucking up his courage. "Shortly after dusk a woman and a man came to him."

"After dusk? Recollect well, was it not after midnight?"

"No, I had just gone to bed," Ghitza answered uneasily.

"You had just gone to bed?" the sheriff repeated scoffingly. "Indeed, I don't know when you go to bed, but suppose it was so. Who was that man?"

"That I don't know."

"Wasn't it perhaps Renz, the same Renz who had departed from you in the afternoon?"

"No!" Ghitza replied with assurance.

"All right!" the sheriff cried with irritation. "Did that man and woman stay with Lica until morning?"

"No, they went away soon."

"Soon? Are you sure? Wasn't it towards dawn?"

"I fell asleep right away," Ghitza replied uncertainly.

All three were confused for one moment, each of them thought he had heard from the others

something that he could not explain. Ghitza, who had no idea that Marzy had been examined before, could not very well comprehend what the sheriff was driving at with his questions, and again, the sheriff and Pintea tried to locate the cause of the contradiction of the testimonies of the two witnesses. The sheriff had, according to Marzy's testimony, built up the conviction, that Saila and Buza Rupta had fallen upon the landlord, that Renz had come towards dawn to inform Lica of the success of the undertaking and to tell him, perhaps, his part. He was of the opinion that Ghitza had purposely lied; he paced restlessly through the room, then, after a while, he stopped close in front of him, looked sharply in his eyes and said:

"So you say that the man who came with the woman was not Renz, that he came towards the time when it grew dark, consequently around the time when the landlord was attacked, and that he went away soon after?"

Pintea stepped a little forward so as to be better noticed by Ghitza. He was holding his hand before his mouth and murmured to himself: "If this is true, then Lica is the murderer. He went away to attack the landlord, he returned to the inn after successfully performing the deed, and now Ghitza is unjustly accused! . . ." Following this

line of ideas, he looked over to Ghitza and made a sign, telling him to say *yes*.

"I could not swear upon my statements," Ghitza answered, although he had caught the sign. "I was at the window and it is possible that I didn't see and hear well. It is possible that it was Renz. Shortly after that I fell asleep and consequently I could not see when they went away. Neither can I measure the time that elapsed between."

"With Lica and his companions you talked a great deal about the landlord?" the sheriff inquired indefatigably.

"Yes!" answered Ghitza involuntarily, taken aback by the sheriff's sudden shifting from one subject to another. "But only with Lica, who asked me when the landlord would come, for, as he expressed it, he would have something to say to him. . . ."

"Only this?"

"This was all."

"Had anyone else heard it?"

"I don't think so," Ghitza answered shortly. "He called me to him, in a corner. . . ."

"Then, if this was all the talk you had together, why the secrecy about it?" the sheriff inquired with an incredulous smile.

Irritated, Ghitza shrugged his shoulders.

Pintea could no more master himself. He thought he understood the reason why Lica had spoken so slowly and yet loud enough for the others to catch a word or two.

"Hadn't the Szamadau," he emphasized every word, "called you into a corner so as to give the whole affair the semblance that you two had something in common, so that later, in case the suspicion fell on him, you would be drawn into this suspicion also?"

Ghitza shuddered.

"Impossible!" he cried out, and his blood rose so in his head that he felt a lump in his throat. "Impossible!" he cried in a feeble voice. "I cannot bring evidence that I said this and only this to Lica; but I can swear on salt and bread, on the cross and on the Bible, that I haven't spoken any other word with him on this subject. I can swear on this," he continued with a desperate outcry, "as I can swear that Lica remained all night at the inn. . . ."

"We'll find that out, too, so as to give you a chance to convince yourself how much we care to clean the roads of dangerous people," continued the sheriff scoffingly, who was very much pleased that he had brought things so far. Pintea stood in a corner, bit his lips and tore terribly at

his finger nails. Ghitza looked desperately in front of him.

It was just as Pintea had told him; the sheriff wouldn't let him go, unless he offered sufficient bail.

So he went to find someone who would furnish bail for him. He felt weak and feeble, and the looks that the people whom he met gave him burnt deep into his soul, he tried to evade them and along the entire way he looked at the ground.

His brother-in-law, Andrei, Anna's brother, whom he asked first would not accept his proposal. He said he knew too little about such affairs and so on. Depressed, on account of this refusal, he went to his cousin, the Popa of Ineu. But many a time he stopped on his way, and were it not that he took into consideration Anna and his mother who were waiting at home for him, he would have renounced his freedom, only so that he would not have to annoy other people. The Popa accepted the invitation gladly to furnish bail for him, and used the opportunity to give him a long sermon concerning the lack of good sense Ghitza had shown in exchanging his former occupation for that of an innkeeper at the Lucky Mill, which was a very bad interchange and so on and so on. Finally, he gave a whole lot of good advice and tried

to encourage him. If he felt himself guiltless he had every reason to be at ease, he repeated a considerable number of times.

The Popa had to write out the bail stipulations and sign them. Ghitza then gave them to the sheriff. At about four o'clock, he had his horses harnessed and started homewards.

He was about to mount the wagon, he and Lae, when he noticed a young, svelte woman, with thin lips, pale face and a pair of lively small eyes approaching him. She told him to wait a while, Pintea would want her to come with him. The woman, dressed half in peasant and half in town fashion, proved to be the servant Uza whom Pintea had chosen for Ghitza.

"All right!" answered Ghitza, "I need a servant, but not now, not at this minute. I'll be back in a few days and then you can come along with me. But"—he continued after a while,—"wait till the sergeant comes, I'd like to know what you have arranged among yourselves. . . ."

He could not account for his desire not to take the servant girl with him then, but he was determined to abide by his decision; meanwhile Pintea had come and had addressed him tersely: "Well, so here is the servant!" and that was the end of his decision, he dared not contradict him, although

he noticed quite clearly that Pintea wanted to have that woman in his house merely to spy on him.

They drove away together, Ghitza had the reins in his hands, Pintea seated himself on the small bench beside him, Lae sat in a corner of the carriage next to Uza who was sitting on a bundle of linen, which she had brought with her.

As customary, Pintea was silent, and Ghitza could hardly keep his composure for sheer impatience; he would have best liked to jump from his seat.

"Don't be surprised," Pintea began after a while, "I have the order to search your house, to see whether there isn't something suspicious hidden there. It is true, I know beforehand that I won't fiind anything that does not belong to you, but I have to follow my orders. . . ."

Ghitza was too tired, physically and mentally; only after a few minutes could his mind grasp the meaning of the words that had been said to him. . . .

"This too!" he said feebly. "So it was not enough, what has happened until now? . . . All right. . . . Pintea! . . ." He turned more energetically to him, "Tell me, by the happiness of your soul! do you think me guilty, yes or no?"

"Don't ask me for I cannot answer you," the

sergeant answered, stressing every syllable. . . .

Ghitza jumped up from his seat and measured him with a flaming eye.

"I understand," he said then with a forced tranquillity. "These are the same words that I gave you for an answer this morning, you want to remind me of them. But don't forget that you do injustice to a man when you reproach him for what he repents himself. And if you haven't been able to know me until now, be ashamed of yourself, be ashamed to your inmost core, for the weakness of your eyes. . . ."

"We take everyone for suspicious," answered Pintea. "That is our business."

"Well, then it's all right," Ghitza answered bitterly over his shoulder, "whether you think me guilty or not. It doesn't matter any more to me, it does not matter a bit. And to myself, well, to myself I am the same I was before."

Pintea was not the man to answer such words; he kept silent and neither did Ghitza utter another word. Both were lost in thoughts, each one of them wandered in their immediate field of reasoning. Pintea had spoken the truth when he had declared that he looked at any one as suspicious. No matter how he would think of the incident, no matter how few points had been found so far to

prove that Lica had committed the crime, he could not renounce this thought, and when he thought of the possibility that Lica would again clear himself of all suspicion, that he would again escape him, he thought he would go mad with rage. He pictured him, how he would grin spitefully and how he would boast of his liberation. . . . And Ghitza was the man who defended him—whether knowingly or unconsciously, that amounted to the same thing at this moment,—who had put himself on the same line with Lica only to save him from Pintea's revenge.

But Ghitza had also spoken the truth when he told him that he cared little for Pintea's opinion about him. Just now, when even Pintea could not deny that he could not help suspecting him, just now Ghitza felt himself to be an honest man, who had shown more resoluteness than all who had condemned him so easily, and while a minute ago he felt sorry that from now on he could be free only on the security that his few honest friends gave him, that perhaps he would be found guilty and he would have to go to jail, now he felt himself proud in the assurance that others would have shown much less wisdom in a similar circumstance, less judgment if not even folly. "Yes!" he said to himself, "I have taken

swine from Lica when I knew that he had stolen them. But you, pharisees, would you not have gone further, would you have been satisfied with the advantage that came to you from the suffering of the evil that had been forced upon you and which you could not change, would you not have tried your best to enlarge these advantages? . . ." A bitter consolation was this lie to himself, for now he felt more miserable than ever. The joy which a man experiences when he sees another to whom he feels himself drawn, when he can speak to him, when he can do him a favor and hear a thankful word from his mouth, had vanished from Ghitza. Nature and her charms which had appeared to him before twice as beautiful, because of his consciousness that in it lived another being that stood so near him, of whom he could think only with the intensest satisfaction, had lost all attraction for him, nothing could gladden his heart any more, every happiness-giving fibre had died in him. And to whom had he felt himself drawn, who had filled all his happiness? Pintea, a fellow of Lica's, who had come out of the corners of the jails only to be on the trail of his former associates, a man who thought of every one as suspicious because that was his business, and for such a man he had estranged himself from Anna, from his

legal wife! But he did not reproach himself for this, for another thought made him forget all that troubled him and began to fill his heart with a dreary consolation: Only for love of her had he ventured in all this that threatened to ruin him now, only to see her happy and satisfied, only to save her the cares of the future. Now he thought only of the happiness of his home; Pintea and the justice, the robbery and his worry about public gossip, and his arrest had vanished entirely from his memory.

Yes, she had been right, the good old woman, when she spoke of the joy and quiet of one's own home, only in this could he find courage and strength for a new life, when the other world had forsaken him. . . . Ghitza whipped the horses to a quicker pace, the road seemed to be extremely long to-day. . . . He felt that Anna must be waiting for him impatiently, he saw the sweeping haste with which she would run to the country road to see if he was not coming yet, it was as if an eternity divided him from her, he saw the moment when he would notice her run towards him and when he would whisper into her ears only a few words, only a very few words: "Anna, don't think of it, don't torment yourself with questions when you see that I am silent and

uncommunicative; for all I do is only for your sake, who are the light and happiness of my life; don't be angry at me because I don't want to tell what makes me suffer, for only I, I alone want to bear the cares! Anna, don't be sad, for it gives me a sting in the heart when I see you so, and a mysterious voice tells me that I am the cause of your sorrows. Anna, at court they found me strongly suspicious, they let me out only on bail, perhaps they will imprison me. But you must not lose your belief in me and suffer when you see that the gendarmes are searching our house. In a few days all will have passed, and as long as your love will help me endure the mishaps that have befallen me, it will be good for me. In two or three days we will go away from here, and we'll begin anew the old, quiet life we had been leading. . . ."

"What is this?" Pintea cried suddenly, jumping from his seat.

Scared, Ghitza awakened from his dreams and looked around, frightened.

They were not far from the Lucky Mill, only one hill divided them.

The rain had stopped and the clouds had vanished slowly. Furtively, the sun threw her rays through them, on the barren peaks of the Bihor,

that lay near the hills, in the richness of a dense forest.

In the middle of the country road, a few steps away from them, stood a rich carriage, without horses and without servants.

"Drive towards it!" Pintea said, after he had looked all around him. "There is something wrong here!"

Ghitza stood up, also, after he had looked around him. All the pleasing hopes that he had borne a few minutes ago in his breast and which had made him forget the helplessness of his position had suddenly disappeared from his heart, he felt himself infinitely unhappy and forsaken.

They had soon reached the carriage; the horses were unharnessed and a few steps away lay the corpse of a child, who had been murdered by a fierce blow in the neck that could have come only from the stock of a gun. The clothes still stuck to the body, the eyes had come half out of the sockets and the face was covered with thick black blood.

On the opposite side of the wagon was a pool of blood, blood stains were running down the seat, which the rain had washed away; on the road the blood stains had been carefully cleansed away and in the grass they were no more visible, as the rain

had washed them away; only along the rivulet were a few horse-shoe tracks visible, but they discontinued after a few steps.

Pintea memorized all this carefully, took another little walk around and returned then to Ghitza, who stood terrified, together with Lae, in front of the child. Uza, shaking with fear, could not even move herself out of the carriage.

"What can have happened here?" asked Pintea with growing excitement.

"One could swear that the servants have slain their master, and yet I cannot believe, I cannot explain it. . . . According to the traces, they rode the horses to the rivulet. They surely bound their shoes there and then they rode back to the woods. . . ."

Ghitza shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you are willing to swear that it wasn't Lica who is responsible even for this accomplishment!" Pintea cried with excitement, and his veins on his forehead were swollen and his eyes come out of their sockets.

"What, have you lost your mind?" asked Ghitza, taken aback, looking in his face.

"No!" replied the sergeant. "But it's a wonder that I haven't. It's he who is behind this!" he continued passionately. "We don't want to lose time.

Uza, you stay here, we three will go into the woods to search for the criminals. We must look for them in the vale; for a real robber avoids steep-rising ground, his horse might fall and leave marks behind, he keeps away from lakes because it is there that his horse leaves the most accurate marks and he avoids the margin of the woods, where the leaves that fall from the trees accumulate and can so much easier be thrown in heaps by the shoe of the horse. . . . So, come on!"

For a moment Ghitza hesitated.

"I don't want to go with you," he answered; then, decidedly: "I went away from home this morning without telling anybody where I went and why I went with you. I have to go back, who knows what all has happened in my absence? Perhaps I can also learn who was in this carriage. . . ."

"Alone, without me, you don't go home!" Pintea replied resolutely.

"Ha! Ridiculous!" answered Ghitza with self-composure. "I would like to see the man who would try to keep me from going home to see my wife and children. . . . I am free . . . free on bail. . . ."

"Well, it will be me who is going to keep you from going. My orders are to search your house

and to let you in only with me, and why all these precautions, you must know as well as I. . . ."

Ghitza turned on his heel and jumped into the carriage, taking in one hand the reins and in the other the whip.

"Please step aside!" he asked then, as he saw that Pintea had grasped the halter chain of one of the horses.

Pintea did not move from the spot.

"Pintea!" continued Ghitza with a faint smile, "don't force me to commit a sin. . . . What do you want of me? In the middle of the country road we find a murdered child, a few steps from my house, and you think that under these circumstances I will be willing to leave my children a single minute longer alone? . . . Come with me if you want, and if you don't, let me go alone for I cannot wait any longer. . . . Get out of the way!" he cried then with more determination, as he saw that all his entreaties were fruitless and that Pintea stood as if rooted to the spot. "Get out of the way!" he shouted now with growing rage. "For otherwise I shall give the horse its head and I will run the carriage over you; there won't be much lost in a rascal like you anyhow. . . ."

"What did you say? . . . Rascal? . . ." said

Pintea, as if dazzled and let the halter chain go. "Now go ahead, if you want to. . . ."

Ghitza hit the horses with the whip and chased away with the wagon, leaving Lae behind with Pintea on the country road.

It was towards evening when Anna noticed Ghitza's carriage coming down the last hill of Ineu. It came with a wild rapidity that made one expect any moment to see it reach the vale torn to pieces.

Anna held her breath and her heart beat in mad throbs. Suddenly she shivered and all her blood shot into her head.

Ghitza was coming alone with a woman, surely the servant he had taken on Lica's demand. . . .

Now she forgot everything, her tempted curiosity, the impatience with which she had waited for his return and only one single wish, one passionate desire filled her heart that cried for vengeance: to throw herself on that woman and to slay her, to tear her with her own hands. She felt faint, her whole body shivered with excitement, so that she could not move one single step towards Ghitza, who had jumped from the carriage and was hurrying towards her. "What's the matter?" he asked, looking frightened at her chalky white face.

"Nothing! What should be?" she answered, trying to keep her anger down.

He took her by the hand and led her into the house.

"What has happened? Who was here to-day?"

"All kinds of people," she replied with a voice tense with fury.

"Anna!" Ghitza began sadly, "don't speak to me in this way, not now in this way! You are perfectly right to be dissatisfied with me: I went away from here so suddenly, so altogether suddenly, without giving you a single explaining word, as I should have done. So learn now what happened here last night; the landlord has been attacked, beaten almost to death and robbed of all that he carried with him, gold and silver coins, precious jewels and stones, all that had been found on him. I am among the suspected and am free only on bail, which my cousin, the Popa, furnished me. On the road to Ineu whence I came I have seen a carriage without servants and horses. Beside it, on the road, hidden in the grass, was the bleeding corpse of a slain child. . . . Tell me, who was in that carriage? . . . I have to report it to Pintea. . . ."

As if petrified, Anna stood before him and seemed to listen with doubled attention, but the

words which she heard resounded only in her ears, they could not find their way to her heart that seemed pained with other worries.

"It was a woman," she replied, "a young widow; how do I know who travelled with her! . . . My God! someone might have kidnapped her! . . . she was young and pretty, . . ." she continued with warmth. "She had a round face and a full figure, and you men think right away of it. . . ."

Ghitza looked at her aghast.

"What is it, Anna? What is wrong with you?" he asked her, pained, and wanted to take her in his arms so as to see her face better.

"Leave me alone!" she whispered and pushed him aside with her elbow. "Leave me alone! For it makes me sick when you touch me. . . ."

"No!" he cried back with resolution and embraced her with both his arms. "I must know what is wrong with you! I have never seen you before as you are now! This morning you wanted to tell me something, what was it? . . . Don't you feel well? Holy God! What is it? Has anyone bewitched you, have they given you poison? . . . Speak out, pray!"

Anna breathed heavily, tears burst out of her eyes, and, wringing her hands desperately, she

cried in his face, in a sudden outburst of madness: "What shall the woman do here? . . . The woman? . . . What shall she do here? What do you want to make of my home, Ghitza?"

He let her go, looking her strangely in the face.

"It is unbelievable!" he said then after a while, looking stark before him. "My brain won't work. I tell you that people have been murdered on the open road, that a woman has been stolen from the side of her slain child, all gruesome, terrifying stories, and you don't experience any other pain, any other trouble but that I hired a servant and have brought her with me!"

"What do the others matter to me!" she exclaimed passionately. "In all their life they haven't experienced more bitterness than I have in this moment, and it is more horrible to live as I do than to be murdered on the highway. You don't kill me, Ghitza, that's just it, you shatter my life to pieces, you torture and torment me to death, you murder me by letting me worry myself to death in your behalf."

"Spare me your accusations. I suffer enough!"

"And if you suffer," she continued in perturbation, "you only are to be blamed for it. Hoho!

Ghitza! Don't you blame it all on my sighing and lamenting! You think me stupid, but believe me, I am not! Last night the thought came to me to take my children and run away, and leave you here alone, alone with your sins. I ought to act that way, I know it, but my heart does not let me, I haven't sufficient power to carry out my decision. For I know that I cannot leave you even if you were to commit the utmost, that I cannot separate myself from you as long as I have the feeling that I am not a burden to you. . . . You need not hide anything from me. . . . You tell me that they have attacked the landlord. . . . Do you think that I didn't hear you speak together about him, yesterday? . . . Do you think that I don't understand what happened to-night? Do you think that I didn't see Lica return this very morning from Ineu? . . ."

Ghitza had gathered during the day enough bitterness in his heart, he felt that now the measure was full, yes, too full to keep to himself: once again he breathed deeply, then he stepped a pace backward and asked with a choked voice:

"What do you mean, Anna?"

"That you know better than I!" she laughed back. "You and Lica, both of you, have acted understandingly, you are both connected with the

murder. . . . But do not be frightened, I shall not betray you. . . . I have sunk too low already! . . ."

"You, too!" he choked the words down, approaching her step by step, like the spider that sees the fly caught in its web. He looked her up and down, raised both arms and remained in this position for a while, as if he were ready to throw himself on her.

"Yes!" she laughed again in his face. "Kill me! you are the stronger; robbing you have begun anyway, so let the sequel follow, and make the entire novel complete. . . ."

He sunk his hands in her full, soft arms and asked her, while pressing her to him:

"You say that it was a common game between me and Lica to rob the landlord?"

"Yes!" she answered with certainty.

"That I saw, last night, Lica steal away? That you saw him come back?"

"Yes!" she answered again firmly.

Then he spat three times before her and pushed her away with an expression of utmost disgust.

"When I think that I have a woman for a wife who is willing to live with the sort of man you take me to be, a loathing creeps over me that I cannot resist."

And Anna sank on the bed and began to weep, softly at first, then ever more violently, till she collapsed exhausted.

VIII

PINTEA had not become a gendarme in vain and whenever the task was given him to trace criminals he was a changed man; on such occasions a devouring impatience came over him, which on this particular occasion had so much the more become noticeable as his personal interests were involved. It seemed to him that he had seized the criminals in the dark, he feared they would escape him before they had come to the light and he could recognize their faces.

Ghitza's speedy departure had taken from him even the last remainder of composure. Even if he had found in the Lucky Mill, yes, even in Ghitza's chests, the objects that had been stolen at the assault, he would not have let himself be led astray from his belief in Ghitza's innocence; he would have said to himself that Ghitza had been forced to store these objects; but all good will towards him had disappeared from his heart the moment Ghitza left him, and nothing remained

but a feeling of wild, blind rage that made him lose his faculty of cold reasoning. And again it was Lica, not Ghitza, at whom he was so enraged, for with him it was a settled question that Lica and only Lica had committed all this.

And when he looked at the child's corpse beside him, anger flared up in him, and with a fiery eye and the expression of satisfied hellish joy in his face, he cried in his mind to Lica: "You murdered it, this will I prove, and I would swear to it before the Court, even if I knew you were innocent."

To lose no time he let Lae stay near the carriage and having made sure that his gun was loaded, he walked quickly towards the woods.

On the sky the clouds had separated, and amidst its free spots appeared the full moon. The leafless trees threw ghostly shadows on the road so that it appeared as if a colossal net had been spread over it. It was as light as day all around, and even if the moon disappeared for short periods behind the clouds it was light enough for a man like Pintea, who for his calling needs not only a sharp hearing faculty but also a good eye, to distinguish everything at a few hundred paces' distance. Nevertheless, he found it hard to trace the lines that he searched for because the road was full with leaves that had newly fallen down and they

shrieked horribly under the weight of his steps. He had walked quite a long while along the margin of the woods, resting his gaze carefully on the ground and searchingly on the banks of the lake that glittered silvery in the light of the moon, noticing sharply every little heap of withered leaves that shone out of the grass, swearing as was his custom, now and then, when he suddenly discovered the marks of a horse shoe that led into the woods. He touched the trigger of his rifle and walked into the wood till he reached the top of the hill, and then he descended again into the valley.

It must have been towards midnight that he came across the stiff corpse of a young woman who was dressed all in black.

A cloth had been tied around her mouth and head which led to the belief that she had died an unnatural death, caused by choking.

After all, Pintea was an embittered fellow who wasn't so easily to be impressed in a sentimental way, but when he sank to his knees to see the face of the dead he could not struggle against a saddening feeling that grasped his consciousness. But it did not hold him long, for it had to give room to the joy that one experiences involuntarily when one finds something that one has long looked for. He

felt on the surface of the corpse to assure himself that the criminal had left nothing behind that could put him on his trace, arranged his cap on his head, and then, after having hung his gun on his shoulders, he lifted the corpse from the ground, with a rapidity that gave one the assurance that he must have feared he would lose his booty were he to go slower about it.

He was about to walk the first step of his way when he felt himself stopped by someone from behind. He tried again to step forward, while he shivered with horror and big sweat drops fell from his forehead, but in vain; he lost his powers, the corpse slipped out of his hands and he fell straight over it. He had stepped on the handle of the whip with which the murderers had tied the woman's hands and which they must have left behind, in their excitement.

The feeling that he was alone, at the ghostly hour and in such a haunted place, and his sudden fall over the corpse soon infused in Pintea the belief that the devil himself must be in this game. He would have preferred best to leave everything as it was and to run away. But when he raised himself to a sitting position and looked with frightened eyes around him, he had to argue himself into the conviction that he could not leave

the corpse behind all by itself; he lifted it again and carried it away with hurried steps as if he suspected some one of following him.

And he really was being followed.

Lae, whom he had left behind at the carriage, was not the man to stand up all night and watch a corpse. Hardly had Pintea gone away before he confessed to himself that his was not the most pleasant task; to have to wait near a carriage that stood so mysteriously in the centre of the road, a few steps away from him dark, gruesome blood pools, at not too great a distance from them the corpse of a child—all these could not but call to his mind temptations to tell himself stories with which to drive away his ennui. It was not long before he saw masked figures at the margin of the wood who were moving towards him, the dead child at his side began to revive, to conclude at least from its repeated clinching its arms and legs. . . . And the later it grew so much more gruesome the child's face seemed to become; he had in fact not dared to look at it, but it must be so to judge from suggestions, it must be horrible to look at, simply maddening, horrid, glassy eyes. . . . Hu! He shivered. . . . With rattling teeth, he sneaked over to the road that led to the Lucky Mill, and the nearer he came to it,

the faster his steps became. He was already a few hundred steps away from the haunted place, when he began to run. He saw the child follow him, make unbelievably long strides and stretch his arms after him, and, strange to say, the faster he ran the nearer came the child to him, although he always kept the same horribly long strides. . . .

Breathless, he ran into the Lucky Mill where the two gendarmes whom Pintea had left behind had not come to a decision as yet whether they were to go to his rescue or to wait for his return as they had been ordered.

"What happened?" asked one of them as he saw Lae run towards the tavern.

Ghitza had stood so far dispassionately, leaning against a beam under the wooden shed. Now he turned towards Lae.

"We are going to the dogs!" He breathed hard, falling almost unconscious on the bench. "The sergeant," he continued after a while, "is still in the woods, on his search. . . . He left me alone . . . alone with the corpse. . . ."

"Why did you not stay there?" Ghitza asked.

Lae knew that he was going to get a hard beating were he to tell the facts according to the truth.

"What, was I to stay there?" he was raging. "So that the men with the masked faces should

kill me, too? . . . Both of them," he continued insolently, "both had come near me, they had killed me had I not run away. . . ."

The two gendarmes could not at first discuss the probability of Lae's story, the fact that the carriage and the corpse had remained without a watch was sufficient to bring them to the decision that they had better come to Pintea's rescue. They each took a horse out of Ghitza's stable and chased away, leaving Ghitza just as Lae had found him, leaning dispassionately against a beam under the wooden shed.

While Pintea was going ever deeper in the wood following the traces he found, they had reached the carriage and in the moment when Pintea was walking down the hill into the valley, Hansl, one of the two gendarmes and a husky fellow, had gone along the margin of the wood in order to find him. During the same time the other men mounted the hill, leading their horses that had been shoed misleadingly with reversed shoes, and looked carefully along the ground, probably following a trace known only to them.

When Pintea's rifle came loose as he fell over the corpse, the two riders as well as the two gendarmes stood still for a second. Then the

two riders resolutely mounted in their saddles, hung dark cloths over their faces and rode the horses in mad speed down the hill. The gendarme that was watching the carriage ran towards the wood, and Hansl in the direction from which the shot had come.

Pintea had already walked down this side of the hill, he was about a thousand feet away from the spot where he had found the woman's corpse, when he heard suddenly two shots, then a third one, and finally a fourth, that came from the road, from the gendarme that rode from the carriage in the woods.

"Pintea! Pintea! Where are you?" he then heard a voice cry loudly into the night.

"Hoahopp! Hoahopp! Here people!" he answered just as loud, dropping the corpse to the ground and running to the place where he heard the shots. He was loading his rifle rapidly and while running, he cried like mad: "Hoahopp! Hoahopp! After me, people!"

When he had reached again the top of the hill he heard horseshoes beat into treeroots and glide over stones, but deep down in the valley where his rifle could not reach. There could no more be thought of following the riders, for, after they had reached the rivulet, they would simply swim

with their horses through it, and then all chances to find their traces would be lost.

He found one of the gendarmes in the wood and both went to look for Hansl. At last they found him on the margin of the woods, sunk on the ground, but not dead; a bullet had pierced his left shoulder and the handle of a knife, pointed towards the heart region, showed out of his neck.

As a rule, Pintea always had pity on his comrades, but this time, the first thing he did was to take up the knife that the murderers had either left behind purposely or forgotten in their excitement, and only then he tore his shirt to pieces in order to tie up Hansl's wounds.

The loss of blood and the pain had weakened him so much that he could whisper only the words: "Look for—the whip;" then he lifted the hand in which he held a dark cloth he had torn from the face of the rider who had stuck the knife in his neck, and fell down unconscious.

All this happened so rapidly that Pintea could not make clear what happened around him, and when he was on his way to Ineu, late after midnight, it seemed to him only a dream. An uncertain satisfying feeling told him that now he had caught him, and that he had him in his grip, this miserable Lica! This whip with the bone handle

and the silver dots and golden rings was his, he himself had seen it repeatedly in his hand. . . . And then, the knife, Hansl was still alive and could say how the man looked when he tore the cloth from his face.

But when they returned to Ineu, towards the morning, Pintea was altogether sound again. Hansl had died from his wounds, and the testimony which he could have made was lost now. The gendarmes who had been sent after Saila and Buza Rupta could not find them, they only carried some silver objects with them that had been stolen from the landlord and which they had found hidden in Buza Rupta's room. When they were shown the knife that Pintea had taken, they all declared they had seen one like it at Saila's and were even ready to give their oath on it. So there was no doubt at all that the two men with the covered faces that had wounded Hansl mortally were the same that had robbed the landlord, that is to say, Buza Rupta and Saila, who departed on that strange evening towards Ineu. As to the whip, it was especially the sheriff's opinion that Lica was not the man to leave his whip behind in such circumstances, besides, someone else could own such a whip also. . . .

Pintea pressed his hands to his head. He was

one of those natures that cannot suffer contradiction, especially in such an excited mood as he was now in after so much painful work; he would have liked to hit around with his gun until all those who defended Lica had been reduced to nothing.

"The keeper of the Lucky Mill ran away from me," he began after a while. "I had no horse and could not follow him. A search of his house would, consequently, have no results now."

The sheriff immediately ordered two gendarmes to bring Ghitza, fettered, to Ineu.

Then he asked the sergeant to report further.

While the latter was relating all he had had to go through, the gendarmes that had been sent after Lica returned. They said Lica must be in Ineu, as he was supposed to be here since Tuesday, in order to settle with a woman whom he expected from Arad, for some swine he sold for her.

Pintea could hardly keep himself erect, excitement and fatigue had so worn him out; but when he heard that his enemy was in the immediate vicinity, he seized his gun and set himself right away to search for Lica, so that he would win even a moment's advantage. He had strolled through the streets for nearly an hour, when he found him at last at the furthest corner of the village, at the house of one of his friends, Acrishor. He lay in

bed and had fever. Pintea had no consideration for him, but told him to get dressed and follow him to the armory.

Lica had been arrested repeatedly, and always showed on such occasions a peculiar behaviour: without asking why, he gave himself up as a prisoner, and followed the gendarmes, but would not answer any questions until he had reached the judge.

This time he swerved from his custom.

At first, he really turned pale as wax and could hardly utter connected words when he realized that Pintea had surprised him so unexpectedly, but when later they came near the armory and a whole crowd of people had gathered around, his behavior changed, because he would even to his last breath remain arrogant and insolent before the people. He began to chew his moustache and looked in front of him, grinning scornfully.

Pintea walked behind him, his rifle slung around his shoulder, and watched his littlest movement; his face darkened more and more, the freer and less concerned he saw Lica move.

"From what I hear you found in the centre of the road an empty carriage and beside it the corpse of a child?" he began after a short time. "You want, naturally, to put this also to my account."

"I don't know," Pintea answered abruptly.

A few steps away, three men stood in the door and talked to each other. Lica threw a glance over to them and then continued with a hoarse voice:

"When I'll see my back with my own eyes, then I'll think that you gendarmes are people whom one ought to respect. . . . Man, if I were you, I could prove you guilty even if you were innocent. . . ."

Pintea stopped a few moments, breathed heavily, looked at him in rage, but said nothing.

"I know what you want," he said then, after they had passed the three men. "You would like to get me excited so as to appear ridiculous before the people; but you are wrong, you cannot play with me as with a harlequin. . . ."

"Well, if I really want to, I can do that, too. I have done it already!" Lica replied. "If you just looked at yourself with my eyes, you would be afraid of yourself; you look as if you wanted to eat me up, hair and skin."

And he who spoke this was Lica, the Szamadau, the well-known Szamadau who had to pass through the streets of Ineu accompanied by a gendarme, after it had become known all around that a murder had been committed the night before in the

neighborhood. The entire village was upset and he knew well enough that every one of his movements was observed.

"What do you mean by that?" He stood still suddenly, and began to talk loudly so that all around him could hear him. "What do you want of me? I am going voluntarily, so let me alone! If I am guilty I'll be hung, all right, but now I want to have peace. . . ."

Instinctively, Pintea reached for his gun. He let his hand fall quickly, but Lica had noticed the move and so also had all the people around, as they came now from all directions.

"Now, do you see? I did it," Lica whispered scoffingly. "Come, let us laugh together. . . . And you may know it, to-day, do you hear, to-day, I'll walk among these people here with my cigar in my mouth and will laugh at you and all your wisdom!"

"You! Lica!" Pintea replied, threatening. "My gun is loaded and if I once lose my patience, then it's all over, with me and with you!"

Although Pintea had spoken these words relatively low, a few gapers found it necessary to follow them. And as custom has it, when there are one or two following something, then other hundreds are with them in the shortest time possible.

So they had hardly reached the armory before the entire village knew that the gendarme Pintea had arrested the Szamadau Lica and had nearly shot him down on the way. In front of the armory, the crowd remained as if grown to the spot, hoping to learn more. Pintea feigned not to hear and to see anything and walked straight towards the armory.

"What do you want here?" one of the gendarmes who was on the watch cried to the throng. "Come on! Get out of here!"

"Well! No wonder!" Lica replied. "The people like to see how Pintea looks when he has the grouch; he came near shooting me down on the way here; he threatened he would prove me guilty even if I were innocent. . . ."

"That is a lie!" Pintea replied quietly. "But so much I will tell, if you are not found guilty this time, then there is no justice in this world."

"So it seems!" he answered scoffingly. Then he turned to the mob that was still in front of the armory. "Here, you! Let one of you go over to Mr. Vermesy, to the estate, and tell him that last night seventeen swine were stolen out of his drove, that I am a prisoner and that I can't go looking for them."

Lica knew these people too well; not one, no, ten, twenty ran out to deliver the message; no one

knew exactly why he was doing it, but it was done so that every one might have the consolation that he, too, had done something in hard times.

"Just look how many are going!" he turned satisfied to Pintea, while he entered through the gate.

Before the sheriff, Lica answered questions about the knife and when they showed him the whip, he answered carelessly: "It's mine. They probably found it in the Lucky Mill, where they evidently got the knife also."

To other questions he would not answer, he was very busy, they ought to let him go, he had no time to monkey with such trifles. He had just to name a few of the folks for whom he was watching the swine droves to convince the sheriff that he would not be able to emprison him. Lica knew how to choose his masters, and he could do it very easily because there was not another man who understood his business as well as he and knew how to sell swine at such a profit. So he accepted droves only from people who had some influence, from people like Mr. Vermesy, who in times of need could do him a favor, too.

Mr. Vermesy Arpad had three droves with Lica and he feared that he would lose all of them in a few days if it spread about that Lica was emprisoned. Consequently, he had hardly heard that

seventeen of his swine were missing before he turned up at the armory, saying: "Let him go free on my responsibility, he has to watch my swine."

And Mr. Vermesy's responsibility was far reaching, indeed; for he was on friendly terms with all judges, yea, one of them had even a swine drove in Lica's care, and the Supreme Judge had also a liking for him; this man could, if he so desired, slap the sheriff in the face so that he would not recover for many days. Whether Lica was guilty or not, was now only a secondary item, and, after all, did all the murderers have to be punished? And at that, when highly situated people could use them?

Mr. Vermesy was just stepping out of the armory with Lica, where the crowd was still gaping, when the gendarmes brought Ghitza fettered.

"Don't worry!" Lica said. "Depend on me!"

Ghitza answered nothing, he looked at him with an indifferent eye, as one who has nothing to lose any more. He had left the house without telling Anna or the old woman even one word, without having thrown a single glance at the household. Nothing mattered any more now.

Pintea felt himself feeble and ill-humored. He went to sleep, whispering bitterly: "Now let others go look for the murderer. . . ."

IX

On the Friday after St. Dimitri's was the trial. Renz and Acrishor were caught the same day Ghitza had been brought to Ineu. Acrishor they had found in his own lodging and Renz in the wood of Sicula where he was watching the swine that had been entrusted to him. On the same day six other men who were held as very suspicious had been imprisoned, and more, the three horses of the empty carriage were found in a meadow far from Fundureni. The traces of the two servants, the driver and the lackey, could not be found; it was not certain whether they escaped or whether they had also been murdered and buried in some safe spot, a fact that was wiser to conclude from the blood on the seat and the blood pools in the carriage.

Only thirty-six hours later could Buza Rupta and Saila be found; they were both in Solonta, about three miles from Oradea-Mare. So they were brought immediately to Oradea and not to

Ineu. The reason was that all the accused were there, with the exception of Lica, who had been examined before and given his liberty in order to attend to his business.

Even during the cross-examinations Anna came to the trial with Ghitza's cousin, the Popa. Upon the old woman's recommendation she had brought money with her, for, as she had said, one can buy everything for money; nevertheless, she was denied access to her husband, and she had to return unsuccessful to the Lucky Mill. Consequently, when she returned to Oradea on Friday, the day on which the verdict was to be given, she was more downcast than before, for she remonstrated with herself against her not having been able even in the least to help her husband, whom she recognized as being innocent.

"Don't excite yourself before time, my child!" counseled the old woman with her usual tranquillity. "Wait a while, have patience; few know what is going to happen, and if that occurs which we fear,—may God save us!—who knows whether it will appear to you as lamentable as you find it now! And if your pain is sincere, you may weep for three days in succession, then you will say: 'Lord! Your will be done!' You will dry your tears and look for another consoling being with

whom you may continue your walk in life, for our life is short and every moment we spend in talking uselessly is lost forever. . . ."

Thus spoke the old woman, for she had gathered many, if not all the best, experiences in her life, but Anna was young and full of the joy of life and did not want to believe her mother's words, and when she thrust a glance into the uncertain future she shuddered and her eyes filled with tears.

Whatever the nature of the thoughts were that were inspired by her temporary moods, she was not one of those who could for a long time think or speak badly of a person. Gradually the consolation had arisen in her that perhaps Ghitza would be declared innocent and only in the moment when she saw him in the middle of the crowd and of the judges did she feel the entire weight of the decision.

This time Lica was led in first, the meagre, suave man who always knew how to draw every one's attention to him.

When Anna saw him enter the room she turned white as chalk and as she had observed the sombre figure the first time she saw him, full of fear, so now her big, pained eyes clung to the firm, motionless features of his face. It was on this man

that the fate of her husband depended, for if he was freed, Ghitza would be declared innocent as well. Led by this idea, she listened with twofold attention to every one of his words.

Lica was sure of the support of the masters for whom he watched the swine flocks. Some of them were even completely sure he was innocent, and the others, even if they had some suspicions, would have gladly done something, by means of their influence, to ameliorate his position. He knew that, but neither did he deny to himself the feeling that the majority of the judges were convinced of his culpability. So he had to give clear answers which should not contradict his first testimony. Indeed, he depended a great deal on the help of the masters, but still more confidence did he place in his wits.

Before all, he said that he could not recollect having spoken at the Lucky Mill of the landlord nor about a servant girl. He denied that Buza Rupta and Saila had departed for Ineu, and when the testimonies of the others were read to him, he answered carelessly: "Possibly! But I cannot recollect. . . ." Then he denied the truth of the opinion that that night Renz had come to him with a woman. Renz had returned, but only he, to tell him that a great part of one of the flocks,

which was in the woods of Fundureni, had disappeared. The innkeeper and the servant must have seen wrongly if they thought they had seen Renz in the company of a woman.

Anna breathed easier; so Lica had departed that night merely to find the stolen swine.

But the judge was of a different opinion. For what Lica had denied, had been proved previously by different testimonies, which had no connection with each other. So it was supposed that Lica intentionally could not remember a fact which strengthened the suspicion which had been developing around Saila and Buza Rupta. Besides, it was not impossible that a secret understanding existed between these two and Lica. As concerned the presence of the woman, he probably denied that fact merely not to have to mention the name of the woman, a fact for which not enough people in the crowd could thank him.

To the question whether he did not think that Buza Rupta and Saila were in an understanding with the innkeeper of the Lucky Mill, he answered that he could not see the possibility of it, neither could he believe that Buza Rupta and Saila had committed the robbery of the landlord or even the murder, which had taken place the second day on the highway. On the contrary, he thought it

more probable that some parasite of Pintea's had hidden the silver objects in Buza Rupta's room. And this purposely, because Pintea was his enemy.

When they then showed him the knife and the whip he shrugged his shoulders and said that he could not say anything; he, too, had to wait and see what the others had to say; maybe from what he would see he might be able to arrive at an explanation of these, to his mind, utterly incomprehensible incidents.

Renz, Acrishor and the other suspects and witnesses, that were examined after him affirmed only that which had been learned partly from Lica, partly from Marzy, so that, when Pintea's turn came, it was a settled question with the judges that Buza Rupta and Saila were the criminals and that Lica and Ghitza were under heavy suspicion of having helped them in their crime.

When Pintea moved to the witness bench, Lica's defender arose and declared that his testimony could be of no consequence after this and that had happened during the arrest of Lica. He asked that the witnesses he had called in this affair be given a hearing.

"I declare his testimony valid!" Lica said with the most indifferent tone, to every one's surprise.

Pintea had previously reasoned out everything

he wanted to say, but the resoluteness with which Lica's defender had put his demand, the cool-bloodedness with which the latter had spoken and the scoffing faces of the judges, caused him to lose all composure. Finally, he did not know what he had to say as a witness. He repeated, to the not small surprise of all present, Lica's testimony that he thought Buza Rupta and Saila innocent, that the silver objects that had been found at Buza Rupta's had been intentionally hidden there so as to awaken suspicion, that the knife had been purposely left behind in the attack of which Hansl had been the victim, that Renz had not come with a woman that night to the Lucky Mill, but alone, or perhaps with another swine herd, etc. Meanwhile Lica smiled all the time, and Pintea grew more excited so that at last he talked all kinds of nonsense, until the judges and all present burst into a roar of laughter. Now he stopped and placed his hands over his forehead that was full of big sweat drops. In spite of this second testimony nothing nearer could be learned and it was only when Saila and Buza Rupta were examined that a new version was introduced.

Both were well known as malefactors, they had been repeatedly suspected of crimes and only for lack of evidence were they acquitted. They had

been sentenced often for lesser deeds and consequently it was hard for them to defend themselves now, when they felt themselves threatened by all who would have liked to free Lica.

Buza Rupta, a big, fat fellow, of repulsive ugliness, denied having gone that evening to Ineu; he had watched the flocks with Renz and Saila until Tuesday evening and from that time on he had been only with Saila with whom he had gone to Salonta.

"Has anybody seen you during this time?" asked a judge.

"No one. . . ."

"How is that? Why did you hide?"

"We did not hide, but we didn't happen to meet any one. . . ."

"Well . . . but it's something I can't understand. Renz went to Fundureni, and not to Ineu."

"We had agreed to meet on the other side of the hill and then to go together."

"Why?"

For a moment, Buza Rupta struggled with himself.

"So that the Szamadau Lica would not know that we go with Renz, for he is our enemy and he would have taken revenge on Renz, had he known."

But Renz brought witnesses who swore that he passed Monday night at the Lucky Mill and that on Tuesday afternoon he had been in Sicula and that Buza Rupta was lying and trying to put him in the wrong.

Saila was brought in. On Buza Rupta's appearance he noticed that their cause was rather hopeless and took all his testimony back, in the hope that in this way he might make everything good again.

He said, contradicting his friend, that they had come to an understanding with Renz to steal a part of the flock at Fundureni and that then they would have gone secretly to Salonta to find a buyer. The testimony that before might have had some influence on the judges, now only caused some of them to burst out laughing.

From Saila's and Buza Rupta's testimony only one thing was conclusive, namely, that they were Lica's enemy, just as much as Pintea was, and that they could not have possibly committed the robbery in understanding with Lica, a fact that Lica's attorney never forgot to emphasize. Neither did he forget to draw attention to Lica's noble character which he showed by taking people, in their need, under his protection only so as not to let it appear that he desired to take revenge

on them, although it must be known to him that only these two men could have left the whip and the knife at his dear and venerated mistress' corpse.

One of two things must indeed have happened: either Lica's whip or Saila's knife had been purposely left behind, so as to put the followers on the wrong track. For it was now impossible to think of an agreement between Lica, Saila and Buza Rupta. Lica could not be one of the two masked fellows that attacked the landlord, although it would not have been impossible for him to commit both the robbery and the murder on the highway, for at that time he was, according to the testimonies of a number of people, in the Lucky Mill. Anyway, Pintea suspected that he hadn't been all the time in the Lucky Mill and the testimonies of the witnesses appeared to him entirely untrue, since he was sure of their association with Lica. The only sensible point was in the testimony of the innkeeper, the impossibility to state the correct time in which he had seen the man and the woman. For this reason had Ghitza's examination been delayed to the last, every one expected that the latter's answers would give the entire matter its final touch.

The tall, broad-shouldered figure of Ghitza,

with his clear eyes and quiet gaze, raised itself from the seat.

Before him stood two men who were totally guiltless of the murder they were accused of, who would have to suffer hard for a deed which they had not committed. He was perfectly convinced of their innocence. It would have been too hard for him to mention the reason before every one, but he was resolved to stand in their defense even if he were to suffer from it and to have the suspicion laid against him that he was one of their helpers and consequently shared in their crime. He looked at them with a warm, consoling gaze, as if he wanted to tell them: "Just be fearless! I know something that can save you this time."

Anna breathed heavily and as she involuntarily threw a glance at him she started, terrified. This was no more the healthy, vigorous figure of the past; a few days had sufficed to reduce him to the shadow of the man he was before, his hair had lost its color and the skin on his face had become wrinkled.

A melancholy, heart-breaking feeling came over him when he heard the sigh in the quietude of the room and instinctively he turned to the direction from which it had come. When he no-

ticed Anna there, he slowly drew his hand over his meagre face and looked again at Lica, at the man whom nothing could make lose his composure.

All of a sudden his entire feeling and thoughts were changed. He hadn't seen Anna for a long time, and when he noticed her so unexpectedly, all the love that he had felt for her since the moment he had seen her first, returned to his heart; his longing to make her happy, to spare her all cares and troubles of life awakened clearly in his soul, he felt himself drawn towards her by an irresistible power and would at this moment have made any sacrifice for her.

He could not run any risks, even if he were to serve others by doing so; for Lica could be scared, but could not be ruined; he was the ring in a chain, where one revenged the other.

Consequently, Ghitza repeated, word for word, what he had said before the sheriff; he only insisted that his opinion that Buza Rupta and Saila were innocent, be taken down in the report. And when he was asked whether he could swear that Lica had been all night in the inn, he answered:

"I cannot give an oath that Lica stayed all the time in the inn that night, for I didn't watch him;

but I can swear, that as far as I am concerned, I didn't see him go away nor return! I swear that I always thought that Lica remained all night in the inn."

This concluded the trial and after a short while the judges gave the following verdict:

"Lica is altogether innocent. Ghitza, whose behavior has given sufficient cause for suspicion, is acquitted on account of lack of evidence. Buza Rupta and Saila are sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor."

One after the other left the room—judges, the sentenced, the suspects, the witnesses, only Ghitza remained back, his eyes screwed to the ground, struggling with himself as to whether to exchange a word with Anna and to console her. When they had all departed, he went towards her, he felt everything grow dark before his eyes which were full of tears. He begged:

"Forgive me, Anna! At least, you forgive me, for I will not forgive myself all my life. . . . Anna! Your father was an honorable man, your relatives are respectable people and you have sunk so low that you must see your husband on trial. . . . And I haven't done anything wrong, Anna! Nothing! Heaven has only punished me with blindness. Ah! I did not want to trust you, to

follow you when you showed me the way to the good! . . ."

"This will pass, too, Ghitza!" she consoled him sadly, at peace with herself.

X

"Don't worry, my son!" said the old woman, deeply moved. "I see only your face and your blanched hair and know all that you have suffered; yes, it was a great misfortune which you had to carry on your shoulders. Tell me no details for I fear I will have to contradict you in the end; maybe the pain you suffered I will still consider too little in comparison to your guilt; I should have to be cruel were I to judge justly. But you ought not to worry about that which you have experienced; on the contrary, you should be glad now of having freed yourself of all the little troubles that embitter and shorten life."

Ghitza drew one of the small children up to him and kissed it passionately.

"Poor children!" he exclaimed, then sadly: "Your parent had an honest father, you haven't."

"Oh, yes, Ghitza!" Anna interrupted. "We and all honest people who know you, know also who and what you are; on the contrary, we ought

to reproach ourselves that even for a moment have we doubted your sincerity."

"That doesn't mean honest before the world!" he answered bitterly. "There only he is honest who can stop all bad mouths, of whom no one can talk evil if he cares even so little for his life. If I have the reputation of an honest man, then everyone is forced to take me for such a one; but now it is different—now I won't be able to do anything if someone takes the liberty to say to my children: 'Your father is a miserable, damned rascal!' "

"You are right!" answered the old woman. "One has to admit many things before the world, for it is not wise to be at odds with it. It is this way and it can't be helped. And if you are on the warpath with the world, don't dress up as for a holiday, but stay nicely at home and try to sew your own shirt before your own fireplace. . . ."

"In this case the women will have an easier task than we men." He was trying to take it in good-humor.

"Man or woman, that's the same; one must only be wise, that's the point. . . ."

"Wise! . . . My God! I had to swallow enough bitterness, and I thought, too, I was wise, ever so wise. . . . But it was of no avail, and I

had to suffer enough pain; but I thank God that it is all over. . . ."

"Yes, thank the Lord," repeated the old woman.

The misfortune had made Ghitza milder towards her and the people in whose midst he passed his life. Before, he was of the opinion that man can depend only upon himself, that he can mould his own fate, he only has to take possession of the reins and to direct the efforts in one particular line, but that this is not so he knew now and was thankfull that his fate had given him, if ever so few, still some happy moments in this life.

Therefore he considered it one of the sacred moments in his life when he saw Anna again fresh and girlish as before. In the bottom of her heart, she was happy that things had found a happy course for Lica, for she could not hide from herself the fact that the outcome could have been a disastrous one.

Like every man who for a long period hasn't experienced anything but troubles and hardship, Ghitza was eager now to encourage brave hopes for the future. Gradually he had decided to stay at the Lucky Mill only until spring. Then he wanted to gather together all his belongings and go away with his wife and children, far away

where no one knew him, into the extreme wing of the Banat, or even over the Carpathians, over into the "Kingdom," into Roumania. And—he continued his meditations—will the good deeds I'll do then compensate for the present? He tried hard to forget all that had happened and to dream himself into a better future which was not very far away.

In the few days which he passed in jail he had many a time made the resolution to kill the man that had caused him all his misfortunes, and not seldom did he catch himself thinking that he would not have the power to resist his desire to kill Lica at once, instead of, as his revengeful mind had arrayed it, of tearing one limb after another from his body and thus torturing him to death. Now everything had been forgotten, he could only tell himself dispassionately: "What for? What has happened cannot be changed any more!

"The poor devil, with his sinful conscience!" came involuntarily from his mouth when he saw, a few days later, Lica approaching the inn. Anna received him with an open heart, he, who had so warmly spoken to the judge, who with his firmness of mind had saved her Ghitza from the danger that had awaited him.

They may have been about an hour together,

and spoken of this and that when Lica contrived to arrange it so that he was left alone with Ghitza. He had hardly been alone with Ghitza before he untied his belt, that was full of gold and silver coins, and emptied it on the table.

Following an inner, fiendish instinct, Ghitza looked at him with a piercing eye.

"Which are these?" he asked with emphasis. "From the Jew or from the mistress?"

He had hoped Lica would flare up terrified at these words; but he was surprised, yes, almost ashamed, when he heard Lica laughing in reply:

"From both! From Jew and Christian! A thief borrowed money from you, a thief must pay it back to you."

"And if so much money is found in my possession?"

"What could happen? Money is money, you are an innkeeper. Here come people of all kinds, and what they give you . . . you must take. . . ."

"And if I wanted to betray you?"

"I am not afraid of that," Lica replied.

Ghitza arose, put the money in the chest and closed it again.

"This is the way I like you," Lica continued. "What good would it have been to you had you told the landlord all kinds of stories which he him-

self perhaps doesn't want to know? Neither you nor anyone else can beat me. . . . Let them sit in jail if they are such asses. . . . Haha! They thought I depended on one whom I hadn't yet fettered to me, they thought they could make me poor if they would steal with Renz's help a hundred swine. . . . Now they have probably lost all desire for the undertaking, now they won't steal from me a single swine. . . ."

Ghitza breathed heavily. The way in which this man was speaking of the mad deeds he had committed, horrified and made him feel at odds with himself.

"And what did you have to do with that woman?" he asked.

"The same as I have to do with you," Lica answered rigidly. "I knew she had a weakness for stones and jewels, so I gave her these things to sell for me; she could do it without arousing suspicions. But a woman is a woman after all! She had almost betrayed me because she could not determine to sell a chain which she liked extraordinarily well. . . ."

"And that is a reason for taking four lives away?" Ghitza asked, startled. "Lica, you are not a human being, what is in you is even more than devilish spirit. . . ."

"So you have come at last to this conclusion?" Lica asked, satisfied. "You should have noticed before that fear of punishment sharpens my brain and shows me the road which I have to go. He is a fool, who like you, threatens that he will lead me to the gallows, for he draws my attention to the danger that is in store for me, and thus I am saved. Do you understand now why he who is with me is always safe and why he who is against me must always be on his watch? For even if he were as innocent as the newborn babe I would at last choke him to death. You were an honest man, Ghitza, and I made you a crook; now, if I want, I can continue my work, it is up to me now to get the gallows for you which you so recklessly offered me. . . ."

"But why, Lica? Why?" the host cried, stupefied.

"I don't say that I am going right away to dispatch you to the gallows, as yet it does not fit into my schemes, for I need a man such as you. But you should see now, just the same, that I can do it if you oppose my plans."

"I'll move away from here to-morrow, so leave me out of your plans!"

"No, you won't move away! You stayed here so long to defy me, now you are going to stay here

for fear of me. Oho! I haven't drudged with you until I can make you tremble like a reed before me for nothing, now I want you to stay here!"

"What do you want of me?"

"What do I want? Ghitza! Many a man has been murdered here in the Lucky Mill and their bones have been found two miles away from here. Since you have been here, such a case has not occurred, do you understand me . . . what?"

Ghitza rose and looked at him in defiance.

"And as long as I am the host here, there won't be anyone murdered here, except perhaps me." He answered firmly.

Lica again looked at him scoffingly.

"You speak like a virgin who does not know yet how sin tastes," he replied. Then, with calm: "Perhaps I felt the same way about it at first, I cannot recollect well. . . . Only that I committed the first crime forcedly . . . only so much can I remember: a few swine were stolen from a flock that was in my care. I felt embarrassed to tell it to the owner, and because I had not the money to pay for the swine I stabbed him. . . . And the second crime I committed merely to anæsthetize the pains of conscience which I suffered for the first murder. Now panting for warm blood has become a disease with me that befalls me now and

then. For, this you haven't experienced yet," he continued with increased vivacity, "you don't know how one seethes and foams with the desire to accomplish something, and how the heart bursts for sheer glee when one crushes his adversary with one single blow, and thus pays him back thousandfold for a word that he thrust at one, for a glance that he stabbed one with. . . . Poison and hate and blind rage accumulate in our hearts, and when the measure is full, more than full, then it matters not whom it strikes, it is enough if it is a human being. . . . Ghitza, you are a man who carries much hate in his heart and enough brain in his head. If you were my friend, mine in life and death, I would laugh at the devil and his grandmother! The consciousness of having you as a friend beside me would give me new courage and double my power!"

"Lica, I will be your friend!" Ghitza spoke firmly.

"I don't accept you!" Lica said with the same amount of conviction. "Men can be governed only when one knows their weakness and their sins; everyone has them, one knows how to keep them secret, another shows them plainly. If one endeavors to find out the other's weakness, and he succeeds in recognizing it, then one can do with

him what one pleases. One flares up in rage, another blushes with shame, another loses his composure. No one can keep the quiet of his soul and his brain with him. But there is one weakness one must always fear, for it can never be well enough perceived; to-day it is important, to-morrow less so, and when one thinks one has realized it in its entirety then one is just on the wrong track: with people who possess such a weakness I prefer not to have anything to do, for they can enslave one just when the joy of life is the most intense. I experienced it once before; that was with Pintea, and I don't want to chance it again. . . ."

"What weakness?" Ghitza asked softly.

"For women, yes, even more dangerous, for one woman!"

Ghitza was silent and when Lica departed he raised both arms to his face, and with one single thought suffusing his brain, he murmured to himself:

"You think you are worse than I am? That remains to be decided! I'll dispatch you to the gallows even if I were to pull you on a rope after me!"

XI

THE money that Ghitza had received from Lica lay on the table before him, he had closed the door so that no one could surprise him; he inspected cautiously every single piece so as to assure himself that it bore no mark.

Bills, gold and silver coins: all lay mixed together, only the bills were, with the exception of one or two, smooth and new, one could hardly notice that they had already been folded once before. One of the paper bills had an ink blot and on another one corner was torn away; but he passed over them as he could not think them marks intentionally affixed.

For a while he looked at the money with an expression of utmost disappointment, but at last the thought that he owned so much money made him happy; the larger part of it belonged to him by rights; he had worked for it, he had saved it penny by penny, and he would have been worried had there been among the coins and bills Lica had

given him some marked ones, for then he was resolved to turn them over to the authorities.

He locked the money in the chest and walked for a time through the room, uncertain whether to keep the money or not. It seemed to him that he had robbed someone of the money and with ever-increasing anxiety he asked himself whether he was not laying himself a trap by accepting it. He would have liked best to throw the whole junk out of the window, but he could not determine to do it when he thought how long he would have to slave to win this sum back.

The coming day was a Saturday, and, according to usage, the money that had come in during all the week was to be counted; all had to be present and it would have cost Ghitza too much effort to free himself from this custom.

Anna was immediately surprised when she saw so much money in the chest. It seemed to her that there was too much money and when she looked at the paper bills she could not fight any more against her suspicion that all the money must be from one single person.

The old woman was, on the contrary, full of joy that the last week had brought in so much money.

"Is this one not valueless?" she asked when

they came to the bill that had a corner torn off.

"If I only had a few hundred thousand like it," Ghitza answered quietly.

Taken aback, Anna looked at the bill and when she raised her face all color had vanished from it; but she kept silent; the old woman was present and she did not want to voice any of her suspicions in her presence.

But even later when they were alone she could not utter one word. She had shown once that she suspected him, and she would not repeat it, for she knew that that was making bitter hours for him and herself. But the suspicion, once awakened in her, would not leave her any more and as soon as the evening had come and Ghitza and her mother had fallen asleep, she wakened. While brooding over this incident she felt her head grow hotter and wilder.

"I must know the truth, if not for mine, then for my children's sake!" she said at last with decision and slipped out of the bed. In the dark she groped for the keys, opened the chest and reached for the pile of paper bills. Then she sneaked out into the room near the top room, made light, locked the door and with trembling hands searched through the pile of bills.

"This is it!" she said after a while, laying aside

the one with the torn edge. "I can swear by the holy cross that I saw it in her hand. . . ."

Then she examined the others, untouched bills that had given her so much annoyance from the very beginning.

It had a little hole as if from a pin's point and when she examined the others at the same place she noticed that they were also pierced. There were altogether thirty-five bills that had this peculiar mark that seemed to have come from a thin wire.

She arranged the bills again as they were and then went into the bedroom to waken Ghitza.

"What has happened?" he asked, frightened.

"Come!" she answered abruptly.

He rose quickly and followed her, still half asleep.

"Where did you get the money here?" Anna asked, pointing to the money on the table.

Ghitza started after the manner of the murderer who is caught in the act.

"How do I know?" he answered evasively. "From the customers, what else would you think?"

"Ghitza!" Anna began again. "Don't play with the devil. This money here you got from one single person—this bill without a corner was in my hands before:—I received it from a lady

and gave it back to her right away, from the same lady I told you about and who later was found slain. These thirty-five bills have all one mark, so they must come all from one person, and namely from her, for it was with her that I saw this new paper money. One or the other, you are either somehow concerned in this murder, and then it is not good, or else you haven't known how to keep away from suspicious people, and then it isn't good either. If I am right, let the horse be harnessed, right now, for I want to go away—away with my children. . . ."

She was stupefied when she heard Ghitza talk to her dearly and with an expression of sincere joy, and not breaking into a furious rage as she had expected.

"But your children are also mine," he said softly. "Don't fear, for I care for them. . . . So the bills have one mark? I looked for it, too, but found none. What kind of a mark?"

"Here," said Anna, holding one bill to the light. "Do you see this hole?"

"Yes, I see it very well. And now I think I recollect from whom I received them. They are from a man," he continued with force, "from a man you don't know yet, but whom you will come to know some day! . . ."

With these words he stepped towards her, took her head in his hands and kissed her repeatedly on the forehead.

"Don't worry," he continued, "and don't suspect anything, if you see me now and then acting strangely, for I must bring light into a dark, hidden matter. . . . Now I am going away, even now, so that I can be back in the morning and no one notice that I have been away. Do you understand? . . . Now go to bed and behave as if nothing had happened. . . ."

"Where do you want to go?" she asked apprehensively.

"I'll tell it to you afterwards," answered Ghitza, gathering the bills from the table and departing quickly.

After a few minutes he was riding as fast as he could up the hill, towards Ineu. It was already after midnight that he was waiting for Pintea to return who had gone to the landlord with the paper bills.

"Nothing to be done!" said Pintea, returning. "Or rather, at least something. The point is you ought to have witnesses that you received the money from him. But Lica is a dangerous fellow who does such things only in private."

"What is to be done?" asked Ghitza.

"Much, very much," Pintea replied. "But only if you were a little more foxy, if you were not so stupid as to support him when you really could annihilate him. By the way, do you know that your servant Marzy is Lica's helper? . . ."

"Who? Marzy?" Ghitza started in surprise.

"Don't excite yourself!" the sergeant quieted him. "You must not dismiss him now, because then the whole affair is gone to the dogs! Just go slow, we'll fix him up, too. I only want to tell you that I came upon many a clue, but they're all not enough to enable us to get Lica. Just a few days longer, and I shall know who is the murderer of the woman and the child. The verdict has been given, but this time it isn't over yet. I'll continue the accusation—were it even to go to the Emperor. . . . Listen to what I'll tell you: the pierced bills come from the bank where they lay in packs of one hundred. Through all the bills passes a thin wire so that no one can take a bill away without breaking the wire or tearing the seal that is on the pack, and now it is certain that that lady took some money from the bank on the day she went to Ineu; the silver coins are from the landlord, but at that time he had mostly large bills with him that had marked on them a round letter and a cross, then besides, some imperial ducats

that had their every third line on the brim filed away. Now do you think you are clever enough to seize Lica whenever he exchanges such bills or ducats in your inn, and to deliver him to me?"

"Yes!" Ghitza answered firmly.

"Now, be slow with it!" Pintea warned. "This is a hard thing to do and I fear that in the end you will spoil the entire plan. Note this: Lica needs money to continue his case, and in all probability he will try to use you to change for him all the money, coins and paper, as well as the jewelry that he stole from the landlord. Whatever he will ask from you, do! Then come to me, I'll exchange the coins, or better, I'll have the landlord give me others for them, but he must not know that you are the middleman. Naturally you must travel all the time either to Arad or to Oradea so that he may think you have exchanged the money there. . . ."

"And if I should be inconvenienced by it?"

"Leave that to me, you just try to become a good friend of Lica's. . . ."

Towards morning, Ghitza lay again in his bed and dreamed he had arrested Lica and Pintea was drawing one ducat after the other from his belt.

When he awakened he was in a peculiar, embarrassing mood. The incidents of the previous

night appeared distinctly before his mind's eye; at first, he endeavored to persuade himself that he had merely dreamt all that, but eventually he could not but confess that all the things had happened in reality. A feeling of infinite shame came over him, coupled with a fear that Lica would sooner or later divine his intentions, which fact would not only make it impossible to be successful in his plans towards him, but would even considerably expose him to reprisals from that side.

"No!" he confessed. "I haven't the power to do what Pintea demands of me. I haven't the courage nor am I clever enough to do it! . . ."

So when Anna asked him whether he had made preparations according to his desire, in the previous night, he answered evasively; everything had been arranged in best order, she ought not to have any worries. In fact, he had expressed exactly what he thought in that moment about his machinations against Lica.

Anna was deeply hurt by this answer. She would have liked to hear something more definite for she really had a right to know it; it hurt her, she could not possibly forgive him for having so little confidence in her. "He speaks to me as if to a child, as if to a strange person who could not help him in any way, as to a hired servant whom he

feels necessary in the household and whom he cannot, consequently, dismiss when she asks something."

When on the following day Lica came to the Lucky Mill, Ghitza knew not how to receive him, how to talk to him; he was all embarrassment for fear that his behavior would arouse Lica's suspicions.

Lica was, on the contrary, well humored and at ease, even more communicative and joyful than usual.

It was God's idea that the small should follow the example of the great; Petrishor, one of Ghitza's boys, consequently expressed the desire that if they would not buy him a horse like Lica's, they ought at least to secure a whip like his. So Anna got hold of a bushel of flax and began to spin large, long threads.

"What is that going to be?" Lica asked.

"A whip for the great lord, Petrishor."

"Well, then let me do it! Hold that one end and he shall have a whip such as I know how to make! . . ."

Anna seated herself on the wooden bench and took in her hand one end of the flax spool. Lica stood at a little distance from her, divided the spool in eight threads and then began to plait the

whip. Never had she seen a whip being plaited this way. She looked attentively at his long, white fingers and how they turned, then his flowery white shirt, his clean-shaven face, the long moustache and his green eyes that flashed sharply. She looked at him and listened to his words, and remembered the time she saw him stop for the first time in front of the Lucky Mill, how cold and sharp his gaze had been then, and the childlike astonishment with which she had looked at him. Now she recollected again how wisely he had acted before the judges, how he had known when to stop. And this man she could take for a bad and dangerous man, this man who entertained her so kindheartedly, who seemed so glad and happy when little Petrishor danced around with joy for his whip.

She watched him as she thought over all this.

"It will be a fine whip!" she said after a while.

"How could it be otherwise?" he answered in an undertone. "If such a beautiful woman holds the other end in her hand. . . . If it were up to me, the whip would, like the fasting before Easter, never come to an end. . . ."

Anna flushed and she would have liked to give the spool to Utza, who stood behind her; she pre-

tended she had not understood the allusion and began to play with the child.

Lica became tranquil, hastened to finish the whip and his face took on again its rigid, cold expression.

"I haven't much more to do," he said then. "I'll finish instantly, and as for the handle, I'll be able to make it alone. . . ."

Anna grew weary over these words. Herself merry by nature, she would have liked to see all around her also merry; so it pained her twice as much to know that someone in her environment had lost his good humor on account of her. So she tried by all the means in her power to put Lica again in the disposition he had shown at his arrival, and nearly burst into tears when she saw she could not do it. She tried as hard as she could, looked smilingly into his eyes, to let him understand a thousandfold how much she enjoyed all he said, and when he walked away to find a piece of wood in order to make out of it the handle for Petrishor's whip, she took the child by the hand and said laughingly: "Come, Petrishor, we'll help uncle Lica look for the wood. . . ."

In the meanwhile Ghitza had been busy in the household and when he finished and came to the Lucky Mill he found Lica sitting at the table

under the shed. With a sharp knife he was making some engravings on the handle that was already attached to the whip. Anna stood behind him and looked over his shoulders. She was tired standing and leaned with one hand on the table and with the other on Lica's shoulder.

At first Ghitza was amazed, then he walked slowly away so as not to be a witness of this unexpected spectacle.

"No!" he quieted himself, "I never suspected or feared anything like this and don't want to, either. . . ."

In fact, he tried not to worry about it, but nevertheless it put him into a seething rage. Lica's words about weakness for a woman came again to his mind, and the thought that Anna could by her innocent affability strengthen him in his desires made him wild. But his suspicions vanished soon when he remembered Anna's childlike open attitude towards every one, and half an hour later when he was alone with Lica, he was more openhearted than ever.

Pintea's prophecy was to come true even today. Lica had brought with him four larger bills and putting them on the table before him, he said:

"Fifty-fifty, brother! I the one, and you the

other half! But of these you must take more care, they seem to have marks on them. . . ."

Ghitza looked the bills over for a while, the marks on them corresponding exactly with those indicated by Pintea.

"I understand!" he said then. "You ask only fifty per cent. The other fifty are to be mine, some sort of reparation money, eh? But let me advise you to look for some one else who would be willing to do the business for you. Don't you fear that I might take the money and go with it to the authorities? I can declare there that I received it from you—and you are not afraid? Be a little more careful and don't annoy me with such affairs. . . ."

"If you had the intention to betray me you would not tell it to me," Lica replied. "Besides, you only think you could play this trick, but I know that you have all your five senses and that you don't overlook the consequences that this action would have for you . . . and besides, I know your love for money too well not to know that I am not taking any chances when I bring you money to exchange. . . ."

Ghitza himself knew that money was important to him, but that this was no secret to other people he did not like. He made no reply to Lica, but

locked the paper money in the chest. Then he took half the value of it out of the chest and gave it to Lica. While counting, he could not refrain from saying in an undertone: "You'll see that money is not a part of my heart. . . ."

And in fact he could hardly wait for the night before he went to Ineu.

In the evening Lica came again to the Lucky Mill and this time brought ten larger paper bills with him.

"If you haven't sufficient money at home, drive to-morrow to Arad and exchange it there!"

"I think I have enough. . . ." Ghitza replied and gave him all the little change that he had.

Only when he returned from Ineu, he told himself that he was not treating Lica fairly. He had given Pintea those fourteen large bills but he did not say that half of it was his; on the contrary, he had insisted that Pintea pay him exactly the face value, for—as he said—he wished Lica not to notice it. Many a time he made up his mind to tell the entire truth; but he knew all the time how to evade it: "What good would it do me, if he also knew this. . . ." So he persuaded himself this time as well, and as usual, while on his return to the Lucky Mill, he decided to tell it to him the next time.

"The next time!" But he soon realized that he could never do it, and the more he thought over it, the stronger arguments he found for his silence. Like every man he became tolerant of his weaknesses after some time.

"My God! How can I help it! God made me that way," he was resigned in the end. "How can I be responsible for something that is in me and is stronger than my own will! . . . Does the humpback bear any fault that he has a hump? He would be the first to get rid of it! . . ."

And since he felt a force within him against which he could not struggle, he gave up once for all time opposing it; from now on he acted according to the mood of the moment and stopped thinking whether he was committing a crime or not. And, besides, if before the world he was a criminal, a murderer, well then, let the public opinion have its cause. . . . Now and then he shivered in depression, the fear of punishment and of Lica's revenge appeared to him in more tangible, horrifying accurateness and then he tried again to quiet his frightened feelings by resolving to leave the Lucky Mill, by going out into the large world so that no one could find a trace of him. But these were only momentary impulses, then the wild panting for profit came again and with fever-

ish impatience he awaited the arrival of Lica who would again bring money to be exchanged.

Thus passed the fall, and winter came, and then elapsed the winter and spring arrived. Pintea grew more impatient, for at last he had found also the corpses of the two murdered servants. The landlord was as well tired of exchanging large bills for coins, both were his, both he had accumulated by working for them. Ghitza always gave the same answer: "I have promised to arrest Lica, but I must be careful, for otherwise I might spoil your entire plan . . ." and then he laughed up his sleeve and shivered with fear.

For he had money now, so much that when he returned from Ineu he could not help saying to himself: "The landlord has saved really a great deal of money!" And the more his fortune increased, the lower he sank.

In the meanwhile Lica had his best days. Very often he came to the Lucky Mill and he was always jovial, kindhearted and generous. And because such a strange change had come to pass within him, the gypsies of Ineu learned to love him. Now they very seldom came to the inn without asking whether he was not there, or inquiring when he would come around to feast with his companions.

And when he was there, then began the dance and the fiddling, and it was Utza's turn, the svelte supple woman's turn, to show her charms and arts.

Lica danced but seldom and then only with Anna, with the boy, or to make the merriment still greater, with the old woman. He liked to stand apart and to listen to the free talk, and there was really enough to be seen and heard, for Utza danced like a real tavern girl and what came from her mouth during her dancing was real tavern ingenuity, as well, rough and without many veilings. And when she went too far, Lica would shout at her: "That's enough now! You're getting really fresh!" And as if in spite of him she danced the more shamelessly and uttered even grosser jokes and illusions.

Then the old woman shrugged her shoulders, trying to pacify him: "How can she help it? . . . God made her that way, the poor sinner! . . ."

At first, Utza's loose talk irritated Anna, later it only filled her with loathing, in the end she became used to it; yes, if Utza made a joke that did not seem strong enough to her, she experienced a sort of burning in her to outdo her and to tell a still more stinging one. Then Lica laughed from his very heart, and very seldom

would he lose the opportunity to express his appreciation of it.

But Ghitza never laughed; he pretended that he had not understood the joke, and whenever he saw Lica turn around Anna, or when Anna nestled herself at Lica's neck, then he walked aside not to see it, his heart hurt him to realize that Anna was ever sinking deeper, in his eyes. Then again it seemed to him as if she tried to keep Lica away from her, and then his profligacy seemed to him tenfold greater. So he felt an infinite satisfaction when he saw Anna eye the entire place for Lica or when she tried to approach him—now they were both equals, both fallen equally low, now they need not blush before one another.

At the very beginning of the Passion-week, Pintea came again to the Lucky Mill and asked insistently that Ghitza finish up with Lica.

"I can't get near him!" Ghitza defended himself. "Well, he is a sly fellow. If I knew once for certain that he had such money with him, I would have you called, or I would arrest him in the presence of other guests. But I am afraid I'll make a fool of myself. And besides, I risk my head for something that, at the worst, cannot do him much harm. I tell you sincerely, sometimes

I take a fancy to pack my belongings and go into the wild world! . . ."

"Well! Well!" Pintea satisfied himself. "But may God save you from the notion to cheat me. You would be lost forever!"

Ghitza did not answer.

The old woman had announced for some time that she wished to arrange everything nicely in the household, even before the Easter holidays, so that she could go then and pass the holidays with a married daughter of hers at Ineu. Ghitza had always answered indefinitely, "If it will be possible I'll gladly go," and so on. Consequently the old woman was very ill at ease.

Hardly had Pintea gone away when Ghitza came to the mother and told her that she could go to Ineu, she should let her people know through a coachman who was just driving in that direction, so that they could make early preparations.

"I thank you, my dear son!" answered the old woman, her voice vibrating with joy. "May God recompense you for this decision. You see, I am old and feeble and who knows whether I'll be able to pass another holiday in their midst? . . ."

The mother was deeply moved, she could not remember having passed the Easter holidays anywhere else but in the heart of her family, with ex-

ception of the last year when they fell just at the time when they moved over to the Lucky Mill. If she were to spend them again as she had last year, they could not possibly turn out to be real Easter. Her devout confidence would have been taken away from her for the entire year, if she could not plant it in her heart in the serene hour, full of gratitude, that she would spend on Easter Monday in church.

Anna was pleased, too, with Ghitza's decision, for it was a long time since she had seen her relatives and her childhood friends, and the children, who had always been eager to see Ineu, were glad they would find others with whom to play, for at the Lucky Mill they could find no playmates.

So Anna and the mother began to decide what was to be bought, for they could not go to Ineu with empty hands, and Anna felt especially the desire to show to the world in Ineu that they were no longer poor. She would have liked best to spend all the money they had saved during the whole year.

While they were consulting with each other, Ghitza had gone to his room and began to count the money. He went slowly to work, gazing at the door and with an attentive ear so that he might immediately hide it when anyone approached.

In the moment when Pintea had spoken so excitedly and impatiently to him, the decision became ripe in him to send Anna and the children to Ineu for the holidays, so that he could find, noticed and disturbed by no one, a secluded spot in the world. Then he wanted to have his people come after him, and there await the end of his life, in the seclusion of the place, annoyed by no one, and having to account to no one for his former life. Lica could not betray him, and Pintea much less, as he knew nothing of their common play. But already at the first step that he had to make in this decision, his vacillation appeared. The joy of the old woman filled him with pain, he felt not sufficient power in him to sadden her and his people when they would return and not find him home.

For fear of Pintea he wanted to flee, but he was not less afraid that Lica would trace him.

And while he was staring at the pile of money before him, the thought shot through his head with the suddenness of a wild beast, that Lica might appear again some day before him and take it away from him; he locked it quickly in the chest and put the lamp out. Shivering with fear, he remained in the middle of the dark room. In the nebulous distance he saw a carriage lying in the center of

the road and near it the bloody corpse of a slain child. . . .

No, to flee, simply this, that was not enough; he had to go far, so far that not even Lica could trace him. . . .

On Tuesday evening the Szamadau Lica came to the Lucky Mill. Ghitza had sent for him because he had to tell him something; Anna had been so busy with the preparations that she did not notice when he arrived and when he departed.

Lica had remained only for a short while. Ghitza wanted to know merely whether Lica hadn't some money with him that he wanted to have exchanged. During the holidays he wanted to go to Budapest, because no one would know about his absence, and exchange the ducats which he did not dare exchange in the neighborhood. In this way he thought to prevent any suspicions that his absence might have aroused in Lica.

"I have a few ducats more!" Lica replied. "When is your wife going away?"

"On Saturday afternoon."

"All right! Then wait for me, I'll be here surely on Saturday night or Sunday morning, wait for me at all events. I'll bring some gold coins with me."

Ghitza shivered with terror when he heard

these words. So now it was not merely the question of fleeing, but also of robbing Lica.

"So be it! I'll drink the very last drop in the cup!" he exclaimed, intoxicated. With feverish impatience he waited for Lica's return.

On Saturday at noon, after all the preparations had been arranged, he declared suddenly that he could not go along, at least not yet, for he had to wait for Lica who had sent him word to wait for him.

"Then I won't go, either," Anna declared, who had made this new decision out of a clear sky.

"What is wrong with you?" he shouted at her in excitement. "I told your relatives you are coming, you have made all kinds of preparations and now all of a sudden you don't want to go away. . . . You just go to Ineu and spend the holidays as happily as possible, just think I am not in the world, and if I should really come after you, then will the joy be so much the greater. . . ."

"I can't spend my Easter without you," Anna said. "And what would people say if I were to leave you here alone. . . ."

"Never mind! You speak in vain. . . . I wish you to go to Ineu. . . ."

"Why do you excite yourself in this way?" Anna asked, saddened. "Ghitza, you are suffer-

ing. . . . Why are you not openhearted with me? . . ."

Ghitza paced the room, then stopped in front of the window and looked outside.

"You interfere with my business. . . . You are in my way. . . ."

When Anna heard these words her first thought was to flee, never to come back; it seemed to her an impossibility to live longer with a man who could say such words to her face. But something kept her behind, she could not go away. . . .

"Well, just for that reason I'll stay here!" she answered in scorn.

"I can't go away from here, my heart does not allow me. You have been entirely changed for some time, I can hardly think that it was you who caressed me, who said kind words to me . . . Ghitza!" she continued with a voice drenched with tears—"I cannot leave you, I am tied to you with all the fibres of my heart, and the colder and more repulsive you will behave towards me, the more will I cling to you, the more will I be in your way. And because you want to hear it, because you have spoken straight in my face, for this reason do I tell it to you, for this reason will you ever hear it from me. . . ."

In fact, Ghitza feared nothing more but that

she would tell him that, and now, when she cried this so distinctly into his ears, he felt himself ensnared as in a web which he could very easily destroy but which his heart could not endure breaking.

"But you hate me! Tell the truth, be open: you remain because you heard Lica will be here. . . ."

"You are a cad, Ghitza, and how low you must have sunken if you are able to tell me such things to my face," she answered and departed noiselessly. On the threshold she stopped again, and turning to him, said: "The one who humbles himself before Lica, that one is you, Ghitza, not I! . . . May God save us from your having something on your conscience that forces you to lower yourself before Lica, for then our life is worse than slavery!"

Ghitza let her go away, yes, he was even glad when he saw her depart, for he did not want to think that she would remain. Now his decision to flee was stronger than ever. Yes, she was right, her life was a slave's life from which he would save her now through this flight. She could be happy again some day, only for him was all hope for a better future extinguished.

But he was mistaken in his supposition. To-

wards evening the old woman went away with the children, disheartened to her very core. Before leaving she kissed her child again, and again, and again, as if they had to take leave for always, as if she had married her daughter to-day and had given her to her husband, to share with him joy and pain, hopes and cares in their common life. But she felt her heart heavy and wanted to speak out of her distress.

"Rarely do I say anything," she began, "although when I do I always say much. But such is my nature. I never mix in some one else's business. You are my children, but I have never insisted that you do anything contrary to your desires. But now, when I see that for people like Lica you abandon your people, even at the Easter holidays, I feel my heart ache, and it is for this reason that I want to tell you this time: don't go too far with people like Lica. It is a wonderful feeling to think of one's fellow men as good men, for thus you enjoy them better: but Lica is a bad man. I never told you that because there was no need for it, but now I am saying it in the hope that you will keep him away from you."

She went away; Ghitza, Anna, Utza and Marzy remained at the Lucky Mill. Now it had a dreary, deserted aspect.

"Well, what can I do?" Ghitza asked himself, seeing his plan come to naught. "Maybe it is my luck! . . . and even if it were my misfortune, could I do anything to change it? . . . who can escape his doom? . . . Perhaps it's better this way."

So weak and worn out did he feel that he could no more reason out what he could and what he could not do. Entirely in the caprice of the accident he seated himself and waited for Lica, with an apathetic laziness.

When Lica arrived on Easter Sunday at the Lucky Mill, at about noon time, with Renz and Paun, another of his friends, all on horseback, Lica was in a rage when he noticed that Ghitza was not alone as it had been understood. At first he said nothing, merely throwing the bag with precious objects that he had brought with him into a corner of the room.

"I could not get rid of her," Ghitza tried to excuse himself.

"What? You could not? You had to!" Lica made a harsh reply. "Maybe you want to fool me, change your mind according to your momentary caprices, what? I brought all kinds of things with me, money and silver objects, I can't take

them again with me. . . . So see to it that she goes away. . . ."

"But how?"

"That isn't my business. She has to go and that's all there's to it. . . . How? That's your business."

Again Ghitza saw the deserted carriage in the middle of the road and the corpse of the child.

"God save one from people who have a weakness for women," Lica continued, irritated.

"I haven't exactly a weakness," Ghitza replied.

"No? Well then, this business has to be arranged anyhow some time or other. So leave it to me, I'll fix it! It's good that we reached this conclusion. I have lust in me to-day anyhow," he whispered to himself and pushed the bag under the table with his foot.

Then he passed through the tavern and pinched Utza in the leg so that she screamed out loudly, out into the yard to Anna who stood under the wooden frame work, her thoughts occupied with what might have happened inside.

"I could bet," volunteered Lica, "that even before half an hour the gypsies will be here. They have an irreproachable sense of smell when they find out that I am around. If they do come then we'll have a gleeful day, but one such as was never

before. I am in a wild mood to-day, and when that mood seizes me I don't count myself satisfied until all lust is satiated. . . ."

"I am in a good mood, too," Anna answered forcedly.

Lica came nearer to her and whispered in her ear, as if jokingly:

"I'll see to it that Ghitza goes away . . . we'll be alone. . . ."

Anna ceased breathing. It was a joke but even as a joke it was too strong, it hurt her just in the spot where she felt herself weakest.

"If you'll only succeed!" she said, with the head lifted high and looking at him over her shoulders, as if she wanted to add: "You are on the wrong track if you think that I mean so little to my husband."

"Now look, how angry she gets!" he smiled instantly. "I touched your most sensitive side, have I not? If I knew not how much Ghitza loves his wife I'd have stolen her away from him long ago."

This also was a joke, but it pleased Anna.

Lica was right. Before long the gypsies came, and while the people in Ineu went to church, at the Lucky Mill the most wild orgy began that in the end degenerated into bestial vulgarity.

Anna refused to dance during the time in which

the mass was read in church, and was hurt to see Utza just then even more shameless than usual. But Lica, overexcited, took her into his arms, pressed her to him and forced her to dance with him. She glanced at Ghitza: but he, instead of minding Lica's advances, seized Utza out of Renz's arms and began to dance, but to dance as one does only to spite some one else. And then, lust has also its delights, and little by little Anna accustomed herself to it and finally came to have a secret desire for it.

To give the gaiety a still stronger attraction, Lica took, after a while, from his well-filled belt four paper bills, spit on them and pasted them on the gypsies' brows.

"And now play till your last string breaks!" he cried and again put his arms around Anna, who voluntarily slipped from him and grew more and more irritated, the more unconcerned Ghitza looked at her.

Ghitza raged, and consoled himself with the thought that "he is a miserable wretch who has to watch his wife." So much the more joyful and undisturbed did he want to look so as to show that he did not belong to that class of husbands.

The house was full of such noisy, excessive joy

that one thought the ceiling would fall. Lica danced with Anna so that her feet hardly touched the floor. Renz and Ghitza had taken Utza by her waist and spun around so that they could hardly stand on their feet with sheer dizziness. Paun and Marzy clapped their hands and shrieked to the point of deafening one, and the gypsies scratched on their fiddles with all their power, throwing now and then a vile glance at the bills they had on their brows.

Finally, tired out, Lica seated himself on a bench, took Anna in his lap, and began to kiss and hug her, as if in a joke.

Ghitza could no longer control himself and, pretending not to have seen anything, went out in the yard to cool himself in the fresh air.

"Now it's enough!" Anna said to Lica, all excitement. "Ghitza is angry. . . ."

"That's just what I want!" Lica replied. "Let us get him real angry! . . . Say, Ghitza!" he shouted loudly out into the yard, "you'll leave her to me for to-day, won't you . . . just because it's a holiday? . . ."

"Do with her what you want!" Ghitza replied in the same light vein, but one could notice behind the jolliness his blind rage.

Anna slipped out of Lica's arms; her joy dis-

appeared, although it was just now that she had come into the right mood.

Meanwhile Ghitza considered how he could best go to Ineu without arousing suspicions; he would get Pintea, return with him and arrest Lica.

At about one o'clock in the afternoon Lica took him aside and said:

"So we have agreed: you take a ride somewhere here in the neighborhood, wherever you want, and leave me alone with her. You don't have to tell her anything, just disappear so that she shall of a sudden realize that we are alone. I'll tell the other ones that you went to sleep in the stable, so that no one except me shall know of it. . . ."

Ghitza had expected this proposal, but when he realized that he had no more time than to say yes or no, he became stiff with terror.

"It will be hard for you to-day, for the first time . . . but from now on you are healed. . . . Don't you see she yields herself? . . . This is the way women are."

Ghitza saw a thick veil before his eyes. In two hours he could reach Ineu by hidden paths and in two hours be back again.

"God ordained it so!" he said to himself; "it's my luck. . . ."

While he spoke these words a peculiar confi-

dence grew in him, he could not believe that Anna, his Anna, could fall alive into this man's hands. In fact, there had come to pass many a thing between them, but that she should willingly yield to a man like Lica, this he could not believe. "And if it should really happen," he continued his reasoning, "it's good, too. Sometime I have to find out how things stand between us, and that it should be just now, when my whole life depends upon my success or failure, that's good, too. . . ."

"All right," he answered then. "When shall I return?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Only one thing more!" Ghitza said. "Whatever you do, don't compromise me before the eyes of the world. See that no one notices anything!"

"That's understood, otherwise she would not let me come near her," Lica quieted him and went away.

For a while Ghitza looked after him, then he walked towards the stable with the eagerness of the man who, blinded and guided by one single thought, puts his life at stake in order to prove that he does not fear to lose it.

While he harnessed his horse in the stable, Lica instructed Renz.

"So then," Renz said at last, "when it grows

dark, only we two return and leave the others there, hiding in wait for your signal."

"Huhurez!" answered Lica, and again began to feast.

A little while after Renz asked who wanted to go with him to Sicula.

"We harness the horses to Ghitza's carriage, load the gypsies on it, and have a better time than at a wedding. Utza, how about you? Come along! Only once a year comes Easter! We'll take Marzy along, too."

"I'd like to go with you," Lica said. "But I can't, for I should have been at Ineu quite a while ago, and can't lose my time at Sicula."

"Marzy?" Utza smiled understandingly. "God knows where he is now. He's probably jumping the fence to his sweetheart's in Fundureni. But I'll go if you only take me!"

That was all Anna wanted: to remain alone with Ghitza.

Only late, after all had departed, did she notice that Ghitza was not around. She had not been present at the departure of the others and she was not a little amazed.

"Ghitza sleeps a good deal," she said, rising.

"He went away, too," Lica answered with ease.

"Who?"

"Ghitza. Did I not say that I'd see to it that he goes away?"

With burning cheeks, Anna turned away from him and went out to look for Ghitza. She saw him riding away, almost on the crest of the hill. She shivered, then returned again.

"That's right!" she was smiling. "He is gone. So much the better!"

Lica rose from his seat and showed signs that he wanted to go.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Did I not say I had to go?"

"Let us not talk in vain," she said. "Now stay here! You are a man, Lica, not like Ghitza, who is but a woman dressed in man's clothes, yes, even worse than that."

At these words, she cooled her cheeks with her hands, with her fingertips took her curls out of her face and said, looking around as if maddened:

"Why did you send them away? I would like to see people around me, many people, and to dance, to revel, till I break down exhausted. But no, it is all right this way, too. You only must promise me one thing, Lica."

Satisfied, Lica looked at her inflamed cheeks, at her eyes full of a wild scintillation, at her lips, opened and fresher than a broken, ripe peach, at

her thin, tall and supple body. He felt that he was in her power, in the power of that body, and as if he yearned to be at the mercy of it.

"Whatever it will be, I'll fulfill it, . . ." he said, seizing her in a wild desire to take her.

XII

It was in the dusk of the evening.

During the day it had been warm, as in summer days, and towards the evening, there was dampness in the air. Suddenly it had grown cool, a sharp, cold wind chased heavy, black clouds from the east, whipped them to the right and the left, but continually forced them towards the west.

From afar dully groaning thunder was audible, but it died away soon in the silence of the environs.

Lica sat in the tavern before a glass of wine, talking to Anna, but inattentively, and listening to every bark of the dogs, who had become presently more agitated as if they had scented a stranger.

His belt, full of ducats, which he had laid away shortly after Ghitza's departure, lay on the floor at the end of the bed.

"You only think so, . . ." Anna had answered, who sat across the table.

"One does not think about such things," he an-

swered angrily. "One feels it! I told you that it will be hard for me to part from you. You can trust me, for people of my sort, especially in middle age, don't say such things heedlessly. But"—he continued—"the world calls me a bad man because I know how to keep my five senses on all occasions. All right, then, I'll not lose my composure now, either. . . ."

He pierced her with his gaze and rose from the chair.

Anna rose, too.

"What is it?" she asked, frightened. "What do you intend to do?"

"I'm going," he said, and took the bag with the precious objects from behind the chest.

"You can't go, you must not go, not now. You can't leave me this way. . . ."

"I have to go, nor do I want to remain any longer." He put his hat on.

Anna ceased breathing, it seemed to her that she had been wronged. Not only that she was left behind, but as if she had been soiled, soiled with shame and hatred, that wherever she would go people would point at her, with their hands, and would laugh, and would turn their heads from her. She threw herself passionately into his arms and begged with the tranquillity of despair:

"Take me with you, if you have to go. . . . I don't want, I can't look again into his eyes. . . ."

"I can't use you!" he said, and pushed her harshly aside with his elbow.

Anna stepped a pace backwards and remained with her eyes pointed at the floor, an empty look in them. After a while she looked at him as if to ask him whether he had not gone, or whether he would not go. . . .

Lica stood before her as grown to the ground, with raised shoulders, his chalky white, clean-shaven face pointed at her, the bag with the precious objects in his hand and his hat on the long threads of hair.

"I see you already making friends with him and pouring all the hate you accumulated in your soul on me!" He spoke loudly, then he turned on his heels and departed with short, quick steps.

Shortly after, he chased up the hill, leaning over the neck of his horse, giving his horse full speed, as if death were on his footsteps.

The rain fell in large drops and the thunder groaned ever deeper in the vale. Through the night sudden lightning bolts flared up in rapid succession. It was as if God's anger had descended upon mankind's sins. Lica rode in crippled composure, the reins hanging down at his

side. He was like a curse, amidst the torrents of rain, in the roaring of the thunder and flashing of lightnings.

When he reached the village, wet to the skin, intoxicated still by the alcohol which he had taken in too great quantities, weakened by his excesses, and pained by the uneasiness of his mind, he was hardly able to keep himself in the stirrups. And yet, for a moment he considered whether it were not better for him to return to the Lucky Mill.

"I always keep on my watch against women, and finally I fall into their hands, after all, . . ." he exclaimed, leading his horse to the right, alongside the village, so as to get again to the forest, where he hoped to find a place of refuge. But when he reached the front of the church that stood lonely and deserted at a few hundred steps distance from the village, he stopped at the gate and looked at it, pleased by a sudden thought.

Without much contemplation he dismounted and began to knock and push at the door with all his might. When this process proved to be unsuccessful, he tried to lift the door out of its hinges. But this was useless as well. So he began to shatter it to pieces.

At the first blow it screamed and shrieked so that the whole empty church resounded with awe,

and only after many vain attempts could he penetrate inside the hole that he had made.

Now he was safe.

The rain fell in torrents and hit against the roof of the church; the large windows trembled at every outburst of the thunder and the lightning threw its glaring light on the ikons on the walls. The saints in the ikons were staring with flaming eyes at the audacity of the man who had come to disturb the silence of the holy place.

Lica heard and saw nothing.

Pulling the horse by the reins after him, he advanced to the altar, where he fastened it to the large choir stool. Then he mounted the altar steps in search for a choir gown or some other clerical dress which he should throw over the poor animal that was shivering with cold. He waited for a flash of lightning that would make bright the things around him.

A glaring stroke of lightning followed by which, as by flashlight, he saw a cloth hanging at his right, a cover over the altar table and heavy curtains over the middle portals of the altar.

He reached for the cloth and threw it over the wet horse.

While he approached the altar he experienced a peculiar, satisfying ease, which was disturbed

as soon as he came nearer to the altar by an oppressing smell of incense and wax. When he entered the church the happenings of the day had passed out of his mind; now they returned with painful exactitude. He saw as in the light subconsciousness that befalls one before falling asleep, the entire village pass before his mind, and also Ghitza, and Pintea and Anna. Now and then he awoke from his dizzy dream, when the horse hit the bare floor with its shoes, and a cold metallic sound echoed through the whole room. Then he shivered. For whatever he might have done and whatever sins he had perpetrated in his life, he had never committed sacrilege.

He seized the curtain at the one end and pulled it with a spiteful grimace to him. But the curtain was of a thick material, and lined with silk, and would not yield.

Now he pulled with redoubled power at it.

With a shrill, piercing sound the silk tore right in the middle. The tone sounded so gruesome, so horrible that it gave him a stab through the brain and down through the spinal cord. He dropped the curtain, terrified, out of his hands and looked dumfounded before him in front of the altar.

Involuntarily, he stepped a pace backwards, throwing shy glances around.

But there was no one around, not one eye that could see him, not one ear that could hear, not one voice that could betray. Nothing moved in the dire silence, only the smell of the incense and wax candles produced a dizzying effect, and only now and then was the quiet interrupted by the shrill sounds that came from the horseshoes. Here in these apprehensive environs every one would be seized with a sense of that inexplicable power that is within every one, and would know that it is God. And he did not want to be at odds with God—God had saved him from many dangers, had lighted his brain and darkened that of his adversary, no, he did not want to touch what was God's. . . .

"And yet, I want it!" he decided at last. He had to have the curtain and that the shriek would not again pierce through his ears, he wanted to cut a piece of it with his knife. His knife was in his belt.

"My belt! My belt!" he cried suddenly with so horrified a voice that the horse stepped backwards in fright. "My belt!" he repeated in a dreadful voice, and walked from the altar back to the center of the church, constantly feeling on the upper part of his body for the belt.

This was God's punishment.

An infinite fear came over him, he would have liked to mount his horse and ride away, ride, ride into infinities, out of God's domain. But God was everywhere, everywhere was man's life dependent on a chain of incidents and accidents that man in his shortsightedness could not perceive.

The thunder was still roaring and whenever it was audible his whole body shivered; the lightnings were still painting the church a fire-like color, and whenever a jagged ray lighted the walls of the church, he felt a dagger strike his heart. The saints on the walls looked at him with horrified eyes, he could not have escaped them no matter where he had taken refuge. There was something in his head that was continually knocking at the temples as if it wanted to come out. He pressed his hand to his brows and bit the cord on his shirt. He felt as if he could have torn his heart out of his breast and run with his head at the wall, so that he might break to pieces at the steps of the altar.

But it was hard for him to part with life. Death alone did he fear. He would have lived always, as long as the world would exist. For an afterlife he did not care.

"One after another," he cried hoarsely, lifting his hand as to an oath. "One man after another, all must die, all that could betray me. . . . I

shall destroy one life after another, for if I don't kill, I will be killed. . . ."

After he had said this he jumped on his horse and rode out into the open. He rode around the forest, then came again into the village, through the opposite end and rode along the street to the Popa's house. He knocked at the door.

"I beg your pardon, your reverence," he began when the door had been opened. "I am in a great hurry. To-day, on Easter Sunday, a great lot of swine were stolen from me! . . ."

"There are many rascals in this world," the priest consoled him, sincerely pitying him.

"Pray!" Lica continued without listening to his words, "have you seen Renz here in the village?"

"No."

"Then I'll just take something in my mouth, ride a while through the forest and to-morrow morning I'll go over to Ineu, where I'm sure to find him. Should I be wrong and Renz show up here, kindly send him to look for me in Ineu. Good luck! And thanks ever so much, your reverence!"

He departed at once, looked around in the forest for a while and then directed his horse down the vale towards the Lucky Mill.

XIII

Before Ghitza had gone away he had looked for Marzy to accompany him. But as he could not find him in his hurry he renounced his plan. He had no time to wait and had to give up his plan to keep Marzy busy in the stable.

When he turned around after he had been riding for some time, he noticed a carriage behind him, but he could not have thought the people who were in it were the same he had left behind at the Lucky Mill. He knew for certain that they had all come on horseback.

Nevertheless, he did not feel surprised.

When he came in immediate approach of Ineu he met Marzy on the country road. Without being noticed by the others, he departed for Ineu to inform Pintea of what was happening at the Lucky Mill.

"How could I help it?" Ghitza tried to quiet himself. "Why didn't God show me in time the road which I should have gone? And even if I

were to commit a crime, now, could I do otherwise?"

He knew that Anna was lost to him. He thought only of the revenge that he was to take on Lica.

But as the human heart hopes even when all is lost, he could not help hoping against hope, he could not help reasoning with himself that if he came soon enough he could avoid everything unfortunate. So he hastened.

Indeed, he reached the Lucky Mill early enough, but as he feared that Lica would discover their presence too early and so gain time to escape, he bid them halt at the top of the hill before the Lucky Mill. He wanted to wait for the dark and then take the Mill by assault. Stretched out on the ground, his eyes hot with fever and face as white as chalk, he looked down into the vale.

"You are a man, Ghitza, you know how to keep your composure!" Pintea said after he had been lost in his thoughts for a long while. "I hate Lica, too, but I could never have made such a sacrifice, I could never have used my wife as a decoy. . . ."

"My wife?" Ghitza replied. "Oh, I lost her long ago, it's quite a time since she was mine. . . . I should not have taken Utza into the house, she

spoiled her," he added then, more to himself. Then he was silent and looked down into the vale.

Suddenly he jumped up.

"He noticed us!" he cried out with a mad roar. "Down there, it's he who is riding away. . . . He was alone with her. . . . Come on! After him! . . . Holy God! My dogs that should have guarded me from him save him, now. . . ."

All five mounted their horses immediately and rode with amazing speed down the hill, but they could not reach Lica; his horse was steadily keeping at an ever greater distance from them, although Lica was riding up, while they were chasing down the hill. The distance between them and Lica grew greater, and when they had reached the village they had lost his track altogether.

"You ride to the right!" Pintea commanded. "We will go around the left side of it; he must still be in the village. Where else could he have gone in such a dog's weather?"

"It's useless! He is gone and the comedy is finished!" Ghitza was laughing horribly. "You just go ahead and follow him, I'll go home and close accounts with her. . . ."

He tore his horse to the other side and rode towards the valley, in the direction of the Lucky Mill.

All the time after Lica's departure, Anna had spent weeping. When she heard the sound of the horseshoes outside, she rose and dried the tears from her eyes, awaiting breathlessly the appearance of the rider.

But it was some time before he came in.

After Ghitza dismounted from his horse, he thought he ought to take it into the stable, feed it and throw a warm cover over it, as it was shivering. After he had done all this he remained pensively in the door, and reasoned out what else he had to do. Then he took his hat off, crossed himself three times and entered the tavern.

When he came in he locked the door, pulled the key out and threw it in a corner of the room.

Anna shivered; afterward she straightened herself again. She stepped a pace backwards and said with a choked voice:

"Ghitza! I don't want to die as yet! I don't want to die! . . . Do with me what you want," she continued then in a louder voice and threw herself at his feet, "but don't kill me!"

He stooped over her, took her hand in his hand and looked in her eyes with a profound, dreaming, lost gaze.

"Don't be afraid," he answered softly. "You

know that you are dear to me, as dear as the light of my eyes. I won't torture you, I'll kill you as a father would his child so as to save it from the pains of the gallows. . . ."

"Why must I die?" she asked, and threw herself passionately into his arms. "Why must I die? How have I sinned?"

"I don't know. . . . But there is something strange in my head that tells me that I can't live any longer, and I can't persuade myself to leave you alone behind. . . . Now," he continued, lost in his thoughts, "only now do I realize how I have wronged you, and if I could read in your eyes that it was I who drove you into his arms only to gain more reason for my revenge, then perhaps I would not kill you. . . ."

Anna seemed to grow old, and, as if waking from a dream, she asked him:

"Where have you been?"

"To get Pintea and with him arrest Lica while he had his belt full of ducats. Lica is the one who gave me the bills on which you saw the signs that night. . . ."

She pressed her hands to her head.

"Ghitza! Ghitza! Why did you not tell me this then?" she asked, crying, nestling herself around his neck.

Outside the shriek of a groaning owl was audible, a long Huhurez. Then it was quiet again.

Ghitza could not control himself any longer. He wept and seized her in his arms and covered her brow with kisses.

"Because God did not show me soon enough the right way," he answered sadly.

Suddenly he turned back.

Steps were heard in front of the door, and after a while a noise as if some one attempted to open the door.

"Pintea and the gendarmes!" Ghitza exclaimed hastily, drawing his knife. "Anna! Cross yourself, quick! Cross yourself once more, for we have no time. . . ."

When the door opened with a shrieking burst, and Lica and Renz appeared in its frame, Anna lay on the floor, her breasts splashed with blood. Ghitza knelt upon her and bored ever deeper and deeper into her breast with his knife, in the region of her heart.

"Shoot!" Lica commanded Renz, who emptied his revolver into Ghitza's neck. He sank dead to the ground.

Anna did not feel the weight on her bosom any more and tried to lift herself up.

"Is it you, Lica?" she asked, looking naïvely at him. "Lica, help me. . . ."

The moment he tried to bend over her she gave a horrid shriek, bit his hand and dug her fingers into his cheek; then she fell backwards, dead, at the side of her husband.

Lica jumped up quickly. He wiped the blood from his cheek, continually, hastily, as if he felt red coals burn him in that place, as if to assure himself that her nails were not poisoned. Then he picked up the belt that lay at the foot of the bed and clasped it around him.

"You look around," he said to his two companions, "for there must be a lot of money around, and when you think that I am in Fundureni, set the whole place on fire, so that I can see it burn from Fundureni, from the midst of the peasant folk. You, Renz, come with the others to Ineu, and you, Paun, go back to Sicula. . . ."

All this he said with haste, as if he feared to stay longer under this roof, and continually wiping the blood from his face with his sleeve. He then hurried towards the bushes where he had left his horse.

The horse, which had made the road to Fundureni and back, had let himself down to the ground. That was no good sign.

For he wanted to get to Ineu that night; he had even to go around, for he must appear also in Fundureni.

The scratch in his face hurt him and he was asking himself continually: "What will people say when they see me with my disfigured face and my bitten hand?"

At first the horse would not get up, then it would not move, and later it was impossible to make it run. At last he seemed to have taken all his powers, with a jump he ran out in the fastest speed; he kept his pace for a small distance, then he fell and threw Lica. . . .

"God's anger has come upon me!" Lica said, trying to lift himself up. "What shall I do now? And my horse? To-morrow the people will find it here, and my scratched face and the Lucky Mill in flames."

He tried to pull the horse to the rivulet, to throw it in so that the current would take it down the vale, but he was too weak for it. He took the harness down and walked to the water intending to walk to Ineu. The rivulet was swollen. "It doesn't matter!" he said decidedly to himself, and after he was in the water he pulled the harness after him. He had hardly taken a few steps ahead before the current had thrown him back. Then he

walked along the bank, looking for a path he knew was near the hill. He walked and walked without finding the desired path, throwing a glance now and then at the burning Lucky Mill and wiping the blood from his face.

Suddenly he stood still.

Ghitza had gone to Ineu on horseback, so his horse must be still at the Lucky Mill, and a well-rested horse at that, with which he could get in time to Ineu.

So he returned again to the valley although he hardly felt enough strength left in him to be able to walk to the Lucky Mill.

In the meanwhile Renz had gone to Ineu and Paun to Sicula.

When Pintea saw the Mill in flames he left the peasants in their belief that it had been thunderstruck and hurried to the Lucky Mill, especially as he recollected Ghitza's words at his departure.

When he rode into the brown horse that belonged to Lica, he started in fright.

"A horse! . . . Lica's horse!" he exclaimed, astonished. "Gracious God! Where did he go? He escapes me, he escapes me again! . . . He could not have run up the hill for if he had I would have met him. . . ."

He waited for a flash of lightning so that he could see his environment better.

But it would not lighten.

In the glimmer of the light that Lica had given orders to start, so as to make the people believe that the lightning had struck the Lucky Mill, by this same glimmer Pintea recognized Lica.

"Stop!" he cried so that the whole ravine echoed. "My God! He escapes. . . . He runs!"

It was so, but this time Lica could not escape Pintea, even if he were to flee he was caught, at any rate, caught by Pintea with every evidence.

Lica stopped, drew himself up so that he seemed twice as large as he was, looked around and fixed his eyes on an oak tree that was about fifty feet away from him, and, gnawing his teeth, threw himself with all the force that despair gave him, against it.

Pintea found him lying with a broken skull at the foot of the tree. He shivered at the sight of the dead.

"He escaped me!" he said after a while. "But no one will know of it this time. . . ."

With these words he seized one foot of the dead man, carried him to the margin of the rivulet and pushed him with his foot into the waves.

XIV

On Monday the fire was completely put out, the smoky lakes looked dreary in the bright, cheerful day.

Everything else had been turned into ashes, the beams, the roof, and here and there a few carbonized pieces of wood. At the extreme end of the grove, in the place where the cellar used to be, a few white bones shone through the ashes.

The old woman sat with the children on a stone, near the five crosses, and wept bitterly.

"They must have let the windows open during the storm," she said to herself after a while. "I knew from the beginning that they would not come to a happy end, but this seems to have been their destiny. . . ."

Then she rose, took the children by the hand, and walked away. . . .